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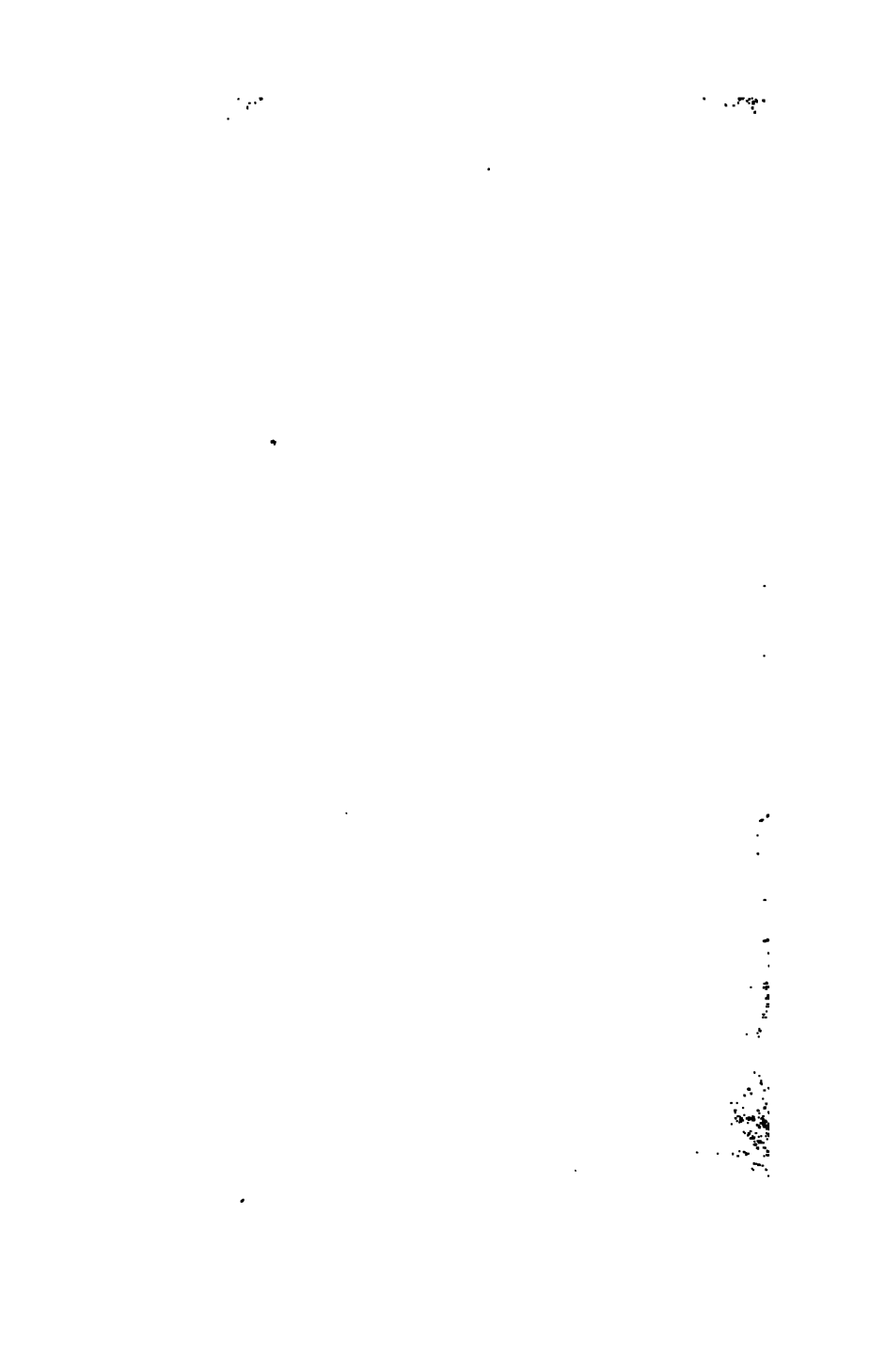


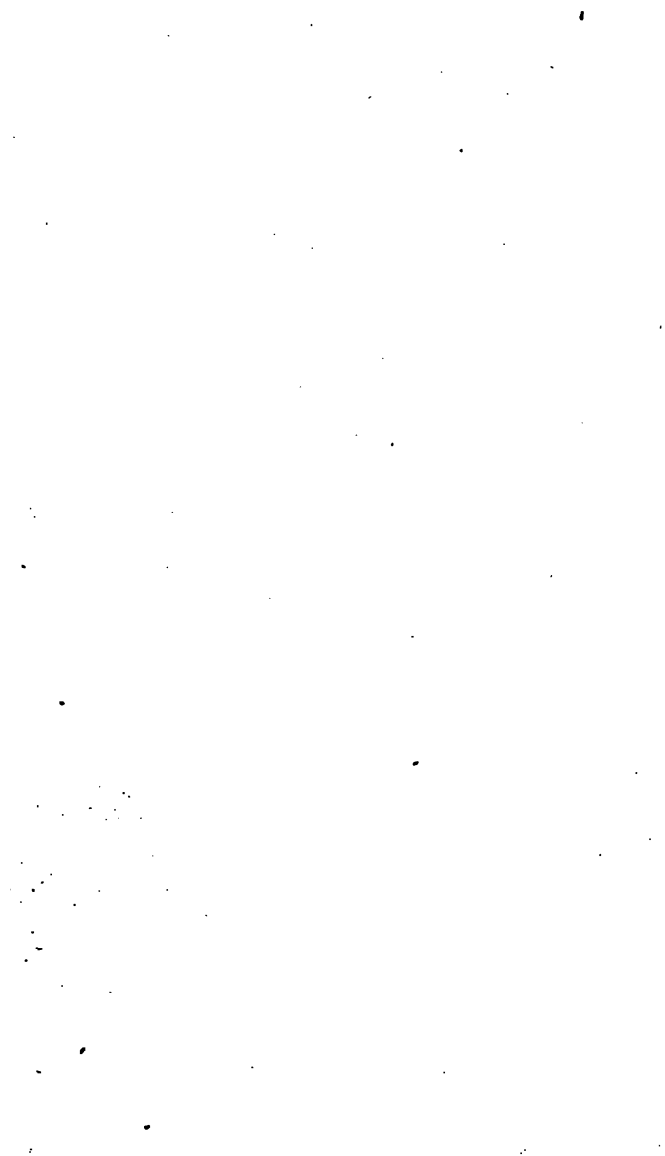


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THE
SARACEN,
OR
MATILDA AND MALEK ADHEL,
A
CRUSADE-ROMANCE,
FROM THE FRENCH
OF MADAME COTTIN,
WITH AN
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION,
BY
J. MICHAUD,
THE FRENCH EDITOR.

FOUR VOLUMES IN TWO

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THE SARACEN.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN a few moments the Prince had collected together all the Christians who were at Cairo: he supplied them with arms, spoke to them himself, recommended that they should leave the city separately, and meet at a certain place he mentioned near the ruins of Heliopolis: there they were to wait for him, and he promised to join them with the English Princess and the unknown knight, whose name he feared even to tell the Christians. From the activity he displayed in all these preparations, the diligence with which his commands were executed, the impatient and anxious manner in which he pressed the departure, one would have thought he was forwarding his own happiness: ah! much more—it was Matilda's safety. Agitated, disordered, he returned to her. "All is ready," said he; "your women and your palanquins are waiting for you; you will go out secretly through one of the private doors of the palace; Kaled will conduct you." "O Malek Adhel!" replied she, rising, "I am going far away from you; but before I leave you, will you not tell me what is to become of you, and in what manner you will escape Saladin's anger?" "I know not," replied he; "one only thought engages my attention; but that is not it. Ask me nothing more, Matilda; do not speak to me; spare my weakness; in the name of your own dear safety, depart; for I am not sure a minute hence of having the fortitude of

suffering you to go.—Come, Montmorency, thou art the most in danger here : I will not quit thee ; follow me, we shall join the Princess again at the end of the aqueduct, near the mountain of Mokathan :” he said, and led the hero away with him. At the door of the palace they found a numerous crowd, who seemed disposed to obstruct their passage. Montmorency had pulled down the visor of his helmet : Malek Adhel took off his own, and uncovered those majestic features and that high forehead which displayed the nobleness of his great soul. He waved his hand, commanded the people to disperse, and the people, astonished at his confidence, overcome by his ascendancy, and too timid to resist a hero, obeyed, and dispersed instantly. The two warriors passed slowly through that multitude who trembled with rage on seeing themselves invincibly chained by the respect a great courage inspires : meanwhile, Malek Adhel was not free from alarms, for he feared for Montmorency ; but Montmorency felt none, for he had himself only to think of. Scarcely had they gone a little way, when Malek Adhel said to him, “Thou hast just gone through a thousand deaths, and thy soul has not even been moved.” The knight replied with a kind smile, that “the Archbishop of Tyre might probably have told him there was some pride in passing so quietly.” The Prince answered warmly : “Montmorency, I will own, that, had I been able to perceive that thy courage was shaken by the dreadful destruction a raging people just threatened thee with, Matilda’s innocence would not have seemed to me safe in thy keeping : for the man who is feeble before death, must be much more so before the passions.” “Hear !” replied the christian hero : “whatever be my secret sentiments, in confiding to me the bonds that unite thee with the Princess, thou hast placed between her and me a barrier that even my desires could not pass. Were it true that I should be so unfortunate as to feed a hopeless love, I would confine it so deep within my

heart, that Matilda could not discover it, and that I should die without even begging her compassion." Malek Adhel, more moved than jealous, on beholding a heroism which he well felt he could not attain, was going to answer, when he perceived Matilda's palanquin, and instantly went to meet her with Montmorency. They together followed their way along the banks of the Nile. Near the ruins of Heliopolis they found the Christians who, according to the Prince's orders, had assembled in that place: the band halted. Then it was that Malek Adhel made Montmorency known to the Christians, and showed them their leader. All recognised him with respect and joy. After having received their promise of obedience, the christian hero placed himself at the head of that band, having Matilda's palanquin on his left, and Malek Adhel on his right. Soon he conducted them towards the range of mountains that spread on the East. After some windings among torrents and steep precipices, he entered a wild and gloomy valley, where it was probably the first time since the creation of the world so many men had penetrated. The thousand warriors were waiting there for Montmorency. At the sight of the Christians clad in Turkish armour, they fancied they were surprised, and prepared for action; but Josselin, advancing before, stopped them. "Fear nothing," said he to them: "I bring you, it is true, the most formidable support of the empire of the Crescent; but he comes hither as a friend: he is alone, confiding to our honour in a manner as glorious for him as for us. He comes to entrust to our care the most valuable pledge that, next to the sepulchre of Christ, the Mahomedan arms ever conquered from ours: he restores us the Princess of England." At these words he was interrupted by cries of joy. All the knights surrounded the palanquin, bowing respectfully, and putting the points of their swords to the ground. Montmorency resumed: "After having

paid your first homage to the sister of one of our greatest Kings, will not your second be addressed to her deliverer, to that hero whose virtues and valour are equally admired and dreaded by the Christians—in short, to Malek Adhel.” That great and awful name caused among the knights an emotion as lively as Matilda’s had previously done, and Malek Adhel would undoubtedly have been moved with the honours that were paid him, had he been able, at such a moment, to feel any thing besides the grief of leaving Matilda. While Kaled was explaining to the Christians the road they were to follow, to avoid meeting with Metchoub’s army, the Princess retired behind a rock, shaded by clumps of wild citron trees: the Prince followed her. She endeavoured to pronounce a few words; her strength failed her, her breath grew short, and, in her disorder, she reclined her head on Malek Adhel’s breast: he pressed her in his arms with passionate ardour, and said: “Swear to me, Matilda, that neither the will of the king thy brother, nor the solicitations of the Christians, nor even the orders of the head of thy church, shall prevail on thee to take another husband.” “I swear it!” replied she, raising her face, drowned in tears: “thine, or God’s!” Malek Adhel looked at her, shuddered, trembled; a burning sweat dropped from his forehead; a hundred times he had triumphed over death, now he could not triumph over himself; in vain did he seek for his courage in his heart—he only found his love there; and the hero, as he endeavoured to bid her a last farewell, could not suppress his sobs: he broke away, exclaiming, “farewell, Matilda! for if I remain an instant longer, I shall depart with thee.”—Quicker than lightning, he sprang on his steed: the Christians detained him. Informed by Montmorency of his quarrel with Saladin, they entreated him to join with them; they promised him honours, every happiness, the right of sitting between Richard and Philip Augustus, and the hand of Matilda; there was no kind

of persuasion which they neglected. The sentiment, however, which pleaded most in their favour in Malek Adhel's mind, was the following: Matilda, who saw the Prince stopping, and heard the entreaties of the Christians, fell on her knees: she said nothing, but her tears were words, and Malek Adhel saw them. She begged; it depended on him to make her happy; he could do for her what she asked of God—he could fill her heart with boundless joy; he could yield, become a Christian, and her husband! Kaled, astonished at the silence he preserved, drew near him, and said indignantly, "Malek Adhel, dost thou hesitate?" He started, looked at his friend, and turning his horse's bridle instantly, without answering Montmorency, he flew away with rapidity: at sight of it, the prayer she had begun expired on the virgin's lips; she reclined her head, closed her eyes, and wished never to open them again.

Meanwhile, after some moments, Montmorency approached her respectfully, and asked her if she would proceed. "Let us go," said she, "now I have nothing more to leave." Sad and pensive, Josselin handed her into her palanquin: she covered her head, and reclined back. If her eyes shed no more tears, her distracted heart grieved severely; she did not, however, beg of God to take away her grief, for she did not wish to part with it. The grief that united itself thus closely to the remembrance of Malek Adhel was, at that moment, her only consolation, and the most valuable resource she had left.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN he got back to Cairo, Malek Adhel did not feel his grief by visiting those places where Matilda was no longer: it was not to weep her loss but to join her again, that he was going to employ himself: the world had not obstacles enough to hinder him from catching again at the happiness he had just resigned; for events pass, but when the will remains firm and invariable, it always at last finds a favourable one. With that idea he had recovered all his strength, his heavy eyes all their fire, and the hero was himself again. Meanwhile, faithful and true as he remained to his brother, he would not suffer himself to be dragged like a slave before him: his great soul might condescend to adopt a voluntary submission, but it spurned at the idea of a forced one, and it was by other proofs that he wished to convince Saladin of his fidelity. He said but a word, and instantly his troops, scattered all around the city, concentrated into closer bodies. Ditches were made, walls constructed, intrenchments formed on all sides; for, while the Prince was resolved to defend himself against Metchoub, he had no intention to attack him. Never did man possess better than he, all the great qualities requisite for the soldier: to an ardent valour he joined a consummate prudence; fighting like a private soldier, he remembered he was a chief, and, at the moment when he seemed the most engaged in wielding the lance or javelin, he ceased not to conduct and direct the army, which he still better protected by his knowledge and skill, than by the strength of his matchless arm.

The second day after Matilda's departure, the sentinels placed at the top of the towers informed the Prince that they perceived at a distance, in the

plain, through clouds of dust, numerous battalions, the lances of which reflected the sun-beams ; Malek Adhel assembled his troops and the people in the public place, and said to them : "Saladin thinks me a traitor, but I swear he is deceived, and will give him a proof of it ; he sends Metchoub for my head—will you give it him ?"—A cry of horror was heard, and Malek Adhel's eyes only met with looks that seemed to swear all around were ready to lose their lives in his service. Such lively testimonies of affection moved and surprised him, and made him know the extent of his power over them ; but he could not be pleased with a power that would enable him to rule over all Egypt, and could not afford him the means of keeping Matilda near him—and, if at all times the hero would have scorned a usurped throne, how much more justly then must that ambition have appeared to him narrow, and insufficient to the vast desires of a soul that could only be filled with the boundless joys of love !

Malek Adhel was very sensible that, in opposing an army to that of his brother, he was holding up the example of rebellion, and became guilty ; but he was hurt at the silence which Saladin had preserved since the message he sent to him from Damietta ; he was angry that a word from himself should not have had more weight over his brother's mind than all Metchoub's accusations ; and, in short, he did not wish to submit until he had proved to the Sultan that he might have commanded.

In the mean time, to avoid shedding Mussulmen's blood, he despatched a herald at arms to carry propositions of peace to Metchoub. Metchoub wondered to find that Malek Adhel, warned of his arrival, was already prepared to resist : he could not comprehend how the news had travelled so swiftly, but he saw too well that this circumstance would increase the difficulties of his enterprise ;—Malek Adhel, surprised, would have sold his life dearly ; warned of his approach, he will surely prove the victor.

This obstacle did but increase Metchoub's animosity, and gave a new activity to his thirst of revenge ; he could not, however, refuse to listen to the Prince's proposals. Saladin might blame him one day for it. Followed by some officers of his army, he advanced towards Cairo, and entered Malek Adhel's palace—he bowed according to the respect he owed his sovereign's brother. The Prince made him a sign to set down, and after a pause began thus : " I know that Saladin has sent thee to Cairo with orders to inflict the most shameful treatment on the Princess of England, and bring back my head, neither of which shall be done ; at the moment I am speaking, the Princess Matilda is very near the king, her brother, and the dispositions of my soldiers are such, that, if I say but a word, this evening thy army will be no more. Believe me, then, Metchoub—return this very day back into Syria ; go, and tell my brother what thou hast seen here ; tell him that prudence would not allow thee to fight a battle in which thou couldst not be defeated without shame, nor triumph without regret ; tell him that I am not ignorant that the Christians, masters of Ptolemais, are preparing to attack Cesarea ; tell him that I am going there, and that, if he will come and meet me, there he will know his brother, and punish me if he chooses." " I know," replied Metchoub, " that if thy arm defend Cesarea, Cesarea will not fall ; yet I cannot appear again before the Sultan without giving him proofs of my obedience and thy submission." " And what proofs dost thou require ?" asked the Prince proudly. " That thou surrender thyself my prisoner, and return a captive to Saladin's feet." " I thy prisoner !" replied Malek Adhel, with a sarcastic sneer ; " with a single word thou wouldst presume to do what the Christians, with all their armies, have not been able to accomplish. No, Metchoub, that were too much glory, and thy hands are not destined to lay fetters on mine. Thou hast heard my offers, I have nothing more to add :

if thou reject them, return instantly to thy camp, prepare for action, and we shall see, before the end of this day, which of us is to be a prisoner."

Offended as he was with the arrogance of that threat, Metchoub was glad to find a pretence to accept the combat; he declared to the Prince that, being charged by the Sultan to make the rights and supreme majesty of the throne respected, he would perish in discharging his trust, and that he was going to arms. He said, and withdrew; but he had not yet reached his camp, before that Malek Adhel's dispositions were made in order to surround the enemy entirely; at one glance he had seen and arranged all. Scarcely did Metchoub's troops begin to move, when they saw themselves surrounded with enemies, and the intrepid Adhel rushed on them, his visor up, and sword in hand, crying out, "Friends, companions of my labours, brave Mussulmen, with whom I conquered Jerusalem, you wish for my life then?" On hearing that voice so dear to their hearts, and seeing that heroic countenance, that brow ever crowned by victory, all Metchoub's soldiers were in confusion; in vain he tried to rally them—they heard him no more; some threw away their arms, others took to flight; the greater number went and ranged themselves under the colours of their ancient general. Metchoub remained alone, and that same evening, as Malek Adhel had foretold him, he was prisoner in Cairo, and his army had vanished.

So easy a victory allowed the Prince to grant some hours of rest to his troops; the next day's dawn beheld them all crowding around him in the great place at Cairo. He caused Metchoub to be brought before him, and, in the presence of the soldiers and the people, he said: "Far from feeling any resentment at thy conduct, Metchoub, I applaud it: in obeying thy master's commands, thou hast followed thy duty. I will not deprive him any longer of the services of so good a subject; return to him: I restore thee thy liberty. Take back the soldiers who may wish to follow thee—they are free like

thee: never shall Saladin's subjects be Malek Adhel's prisoners. Still, however, if I permit them to follow thee, thou must not oppose their marching with me to Cesarea, if they should prefer it; it is for them to choose between us."

He said, and Metchoub in vain looked around him for a single man that could make him amends for the desertion of all the rest; not one came forward, not one seemed to hesitate—he saw it, and trembled with rage. Thus, those numerous soldiers that he brought to chastise a rebel had become the instruments of his triumph, and served but to raise the splendour of it; and he whom he hoped to be revenged upon, forgave him. He was forced to go back alone, with shame, by those same roads which, some days before, were, as he thought, to lead him to victory. The Prince saw his grief, and tried to soothe him thus: "Do not grieve, Metchoub: behold, in the conduct of thy men, the effect of their courage only! I spoke of fighting, and all have wished to follow me; hadst thou showed them the enemy, with thee they would have marched."

These generous words did not allay Metchoub's confusion: they, on the contrary, inflamed his resentment, by forcing him to gratitude: he hastened to quit the scene of his shame, and set off with some officers, who, moved with his situation, consented to escort him back. While he took the road to Kouroutba, Malek Adhel, adored by the soldiers he had just reclaimed, heard them congratulating each other on their change of leader; he read in their anxious looks the certainty of victory attached to the happiness of having him for their master, and he bestowed on such grateful confidence the only reward capable of acquitting him—he gave the order to march, and sat off for Cesarea.

The inhabitants of that city did not behold, without alarm, the preparations of the Christians, who threatened their walls. Frightened by the example of Ptolemais, they saw in its fall their approaching destiny, and, in order to obtain a better capitu-

lation, they had resolved to submit to the victors as soon as they should appear under their ramparts. But on a sudden an army appeared, disorder and confusion prevailed in the city, and the people exclaimed: "The Christians, the Christians are coming!" The people and their chiefs, struck with dismay, proposed to open their gates to the enemy. Meanwhile, at the moment when the chains were creaking under the hands of the soldiers who were lowering the drawbridges, the standard of the Crescent was recognised; soon they learnt it was Malek Adhel, who was advancing with the intention of defending the city, and instantly that name made as many brave men of all those cowards who were preparing to surrender; they were determined to bury themselves under their ruins, and reckoned the honour of a noble death much above the shame of a long life: so true is it, that the sight of a hero revives all who surround him, banishes all pusillanimous fears, and inspires noble sentiments. The people of Cesarea went out in crowds through the city gates, and marched forward to meet their deliverer with acclamations of joy: all would touch his garments—kiss his victorious hands. The blessing bestowed on him mounted up to heaven; they named him the protector of Cesarea, the Saviour of the Empire. The intoxication his presence caused broke out into the warmest transports; he saw it, and grieved; for he felt that love can only be repaid with love, and that he would not be deserving of that people's tenderness if he denied them his own. "Alas! Matilda," said he to himself, "this is the people whom thy law would force me to abandon, and whose blood perhaps it would force me to shed!" Overcome by that idea, which deprived him of all hope, in showing him the extent of his duties, he fell into a deep melancholy—still he did not receive less kindly, nor less gratefully, the lively effusions of those who came forward to meet him: he entered Cesarea amidst the noise of general acclamations; some strewed flowers, others

kissed the ground where he walked : the chiefs of the city brought him the keys, and seemed much happier to give him up the government, than they had been to receive it. His first care was to make his soldiers rest ; the second, to go and visit the fortifications, and inquire after the means of defence. His indefatigable activity had soon examined every detail ; then only did he consent to retire under the pretence of taking a few hours sleep, but, in fact, to think of that concern the nearest to his heart, though honour had triumphed over it.

He called Kaled.—“ Kaled,” said he, “ I am in want of a friend that would expose his life to serve me, and thee have I chosen.” “ All thy people would envy me this glorious preference,” answered Kaled, “ but none can deserve it better than I :—speak, I am ready, all my blood is thine.”—“ Leave Cesarea to-night, advance towards the Christian camp ; endeavour to make thy way into it ; inquire if the English Princess is arrived. Kaled, I own it, until I know her safe, the wound her departure has made in my heart will not close. If thou couldst see her, but how can I hope it ? they will not permit thee.—Yet, if thou shouldst be found out, treated like a spy by the Christians—if thy life be in danger, demand to be introduced to the Princess ; she will soon recognise my friend, and will take good care that no harm be done to him.” “ I understand thee,” replied Kaled, “ and I promise thee that prudence shall not so much guide my steps as to prevent my being brought before the woman thou lovest ; rest assured I will not return hither without having seen her.” The Prince, moved at these words, pressed him in his arms ; Kaled bowed respectfully, and said : “ Now let me die ; I have received my reward :” “ O friendship !” exclaimed Malek Adhel, “ how sweet thy tears, how great thy sentiments !” “ Thou seest that heaven above our heads,” replied Kaled ; “ ah ! the friendship of such a man as thou raises my heart even much higher. Great Prince, remain always what

thou art, the support of this empire, of which thou mightest be the master. Submitting to thy brother, leave him the power, and reign by love : carry the arms of Saladin to the confines of the world, and be sure, that throughout the extent of his vast dominions, if every thing is done by his commands, nothing will be done but in thy name." " Kaled," replied the Prince sorrowfully, " what sayst thou? have I ever envied my brother's power? has the splendour of a throne tempted me? was it to ascend it that I took up arms? Ah! far from being moved by these wretched advantages, I weep that I am so near to them : in a more obscure condition I might follow the weaknesses of my heart without having to fear the reproaches of my sovereign, my country, and my conscience. When love, in distress, urged me to abandon my brother, and urged me in vain, what canst thou fear from ambition?" " Pardon me," answered Kaled, " that I formed such a suspicion ; others may have formed it too, for but few men can understand the great things that move thy heart, or believe that he who could do all wishes for nothing.—But enough ; night is coming on ; I am going ; depend on my zeal. If I am destined no more to meet thee on this earth, we will meet again in a better world, and there, if thou wilt but say, ' Kaled, I am satisfied with thee,' Kaled will have nothing more to ask of Mahomet." As he finished these words, he did not wait for Malek Adhel's answer : he went away, happy in having found an opportunity of proving his attachment to his master ; while the Prince, seeing himself the object of such ardent and pure zeal, shed happier tears, and the mild satisfaction friendship had infused into his soul cooled for a short time the devouring flames of passion : he tasted some instants of tranquil sleep, the first since Matilda's departure, and he owed that comfort to the beneficent cares of friendship.

But while repose had thus approached him, what confusion prevailed in Saladin's court ! What rage

corroded the heart of Agnes! In his way back, Metchoub had met her advancing towards Cairo, at the head of a numerous band of Mussulmen: she was coming to assist in the Prince's defeat, and enjoy the punishment inflicted on her rival; but, on hearing Malek Adhel was the conqueror, and Matilda safe, she would have died with grief and rage, had not Metchoub given her hopes of being able, by a rapid march, to overtake and punish the Princess of England, before she could reach the christian camp. Agnes heard no more: jealousy and revenge supplied her with wings, and followed by the soldiers she commanded, she took the road to Ptolemais. Metchoub proceeded, arrived, told the Sultan that his brother had openly raised the standard of rebellion, and was master of all Egypt; that, seduced by his lavish bounty, the twelve thousand men sent to reduce him had passed over to his side; that not satisfied with ruling in Africa, he was marching towards Cesarea, there to conclude his alliance with the Christians, and at the head of these united forces, challenge the whole empire of the Crescent.

Pale and motionless, Saladin listened, in silence, to that distressing account; but scarcely had Metchoub ceased to speak, when he no longer repressed his rage, and dreadful screams broke out from him. Never had he experienced such anguish, or received such insults; his most faithful soldiers had betrayed him, left him for the sake of the traitor to whom he had given his heart and the half of his empire. Wretched Prince! wounded in thy most sensible parts—pride and friendship, thou breathest revenge, and no longer on the Christians alone longest to make it fall. They are no longer the foes thou fearest and hatest the most: it seems to thee, thou hast no other enemy on earth but Malek Adhel: for his blood alone thou thirstest. The fall of Ptolemais is nothing to thee: thou thinkest only of the defence of Cesarea, and it imports to thee but little that the Christians should triumph over thy empire, provi-

ded the perfidious friend who betrayed thee perish by thy own hand.

Saladin left his tent, assembled his army, walked among the ranks, vomited dreadful imprecations against those who should refuse to curse the perfidy of Malek Adhel, and of the troops that abandoned Metchoub. "Cesarea, Cesarea!" exclaimed he, "thou shalt witness my vengeance: it shall be dreadful like the crime. Mahomet, thou whose faith the perfidious Adhel has deserted, assist me to strike down the wretch. Let all those who have offended us share the effects of our wrath; let the sword of God tear their souls from their bodies, and abandon them in the dust; let the fields be strewn with them as with autumn leaves; let our swords drink their blood to intoxication; let the lions of war mangle them with the teeth of victory! I will stand up on my steed to pass the river of blood; and, when I see the traitor Adhel breathing his last, I will tell him—Thou who knowest so well how Saladin could love, learn also how terrible he can punish!"

He said, and the whole army, moved with his grief, fired with his wrath, shared in his indignation. Thousands of swords were brandished in the air; raving screams were heard; on all sides broke out these exclamations, "Cesarea, Cesarea, Cesarea!"—"Yes, there we will find the traitor; thither we must march instantly," exclaimed the Sultan.—His troops were ready in a moment. Saladin left his camp, which he first took care to fortify against all attack: he gave Metchoub the command of the van, placed himself in the centre, advanced quickly, and broke through his gloomy silence only to repeat, with a raging and formidable voice, "Cesarea! Cesarea!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE sentiment Matilda had inspired, that which she experienced, had enlightened her innocence in the various languages of love ; and, though Montmorency's only expressed itself by his silence, she could not help understanding it, but could not, at the same time, refrain from admiring the fortitude with which he confined it within the bounds of the most profound respect. Sad and pensive, he rode some distance from her palanquin ; and if she spoke to him, he answered her as briefly as possible : once only, as she was talking to him about Béren-gère, and the joy she must have experienced on seeing her Lord again, he answered, " Ah ! Madam, for those who know and love you, can there be any joy far from you ?"—After these few words, which made the Princess blush, and which she left unanswered, he remained silent ; and fearing he had said too much, he atoned for his fault by speaking to her still less.

In the mean time, they approached Palestine : Askelon and Ramah they had left far behind them ; and soon the lofty hills that surrounded Ptolemais were on the point of appearing, when a considerable detachment of Turkish soldiers presented themselves at a distance. The advantage of numbers must have given them great confidence ; but, had they known that Montmorency commanded the Christians, perhaps with twice their force they would not have deemed themselves strong enough.

Josselin, perceiving the enemy riding full speed upon him, hesitated what resolution he should adopt. He wished, according to his usual practice, to have sprung to meet them ; but he would not leave the Princess, for it was her particularly he was to defend. Thus the hero, who until that day had never seen

himself attacked first, and never calculated the number of his enemies till he had vanquished them, for the first time in his life counted them, waited for their attack, and all the efforts of his courage were employed in tempering his valour. The other knights followed his example: ranged round the Princess, they contented themselves with remaining on the defensive. On seeing them still, and disposed to shun the engagement, the astonished Mussulmen asked each other whether they were really Christians; if they seemed so by their arms, they contradicted their appearance by their conduct. That sort of terror the Mussulinen supposed them to be under inspired them with a rash confidence: they advanced precipitately, persuaded that it required no great efforts to conquer an enemy who seemed afraid: but, on a sudden, their first line was broken by the arm of Montmorency. He likewise rushed through the second, and the third. His blows were so well aimed that they all took effect; and so swift, that the Mussulmen fell without knowing the hand which struck them. Meanwhile, at the sight of the hero's high deportment and proud countenance, the name of Montmorency flew through the ranks; and that formidable sound inspired so much terror, that Malek Adhel's name alone could have revived their courage. Though dispersed, a single warrior resisted still: all his fury seemed directed against the palanquin that contained the Princess. He approached, and darted his javelin: the javelin flew, pierced through the wood, and struck the arm of the Princess. The blood flowed: at the sight of it, Montmorency, fired with rage, rushed on the sacrilegious warrior. This last, whom the numbers of the Christians had not dismayed, trembled before Montmorency, for he saw death in his looks. He spurred his courser, and flew away: led him through a thousand windings, and slackened his rapidity only when at a distance from the Christians. Josselin sprang after, and struck him with his mighty arm. The valour

of his adversary astonished him; but he soon triumphed over it: victory had never waited for Montmorency: his enemy was on the ground; he raised his arm, and was going to despatch him.—“Strike, Montmorency!” exclaimed the warrior in a feeble voice; “plunge thy dagger into a woman’s breast!”—At the name of woman the French hero stopped. He doubted what he heard, for she had resisted with a soldier’s might; but, in cutting the ligaments that fastened the helmet, he recognised a woman’s delicate features and long hair; and, although he perceived the Mussulmen rallying, honour would not allow him to go away before he had offered his assistance to his fair antagonist; but scarcely had Agnes risen from the ground, when she took up her lance and her buckler, and renewed the fight. Montmorency parried her blows, but gave none. Meanwhile the Turks approached.—“Come to me, subjects of Saladin,” exclaimed Agnes, “and Montmorency is yours!” She said, and Josselin was surrounded. Disengaged then from his pursuit, the daughter of Amaury set off to join the Christians, and satiate her vengeance. Montmorency saw her design, and trembled for Matilda. He raised his mighty sword, dispersed the crowd of enemies that surrounded him, broke through the ranks of the Mussulmen, and rushed after Agnes: this last, enraged on seeing him free, turned round, and aimed dreadful blows at him. The hero hesitated: if he overcame Agnes, he would be sure to escape the Saracens, and join the Christians; but he feared death less than the shame of shedding a woman’s blood. With a firm courage, he, therefore, devoted himself; waited for the Mussulmen, and fought, at the same time, against Agnes and an army. Would he not have lived enough, if he could in dying save Matilda and the Christians? and heard he not his ancestors crying from their graves, “What imported life provided honour remained?” and was not a

Montmorency to count for lost all the days glory had not filled up?

This heroic resolution revived a new ardour in his breast. Agnes wondered, and began to think him matchless. Seeing him struggling with thousands, the inequality of the engagement disturbed her: she felt something like remorse, and would have ranged on his side, had she not beheld in him the champion of Matilda. Meanwhile the hero heaped up victims, the Turks were falling back before him; but the Saracens returned to the charge, surrounded him on all sides; in vain Josselin mowed down heads; his enemies seemed not to diminish; soon his body was covered with wounds, his cuirass with blood, and his sword broke in a Mussulman's breast—he tore out the stump, and, weakened by the loss of blood, fell on his knees and fought still, and the prodigies of his expiring strength eclipsed the high deeds of his glorious life.

But the Christians had missed their chief; they dispersed in quest of him; at last they discovered the enemy, and, without speaking a word to each other, flew to encounter them. The fierce Agnes tried to stop them; they threw her down, and went on: among heaps of dead bodies they beheld Montmorency on one knee on the ground, yet keeping off the Saracens with the stump of his sword, while his horse, expiring by his side, seemed to lament he could no longer assist his master.

The Saracens flew at the sight of the Christians, and led Agnes away with them: but alas! it was too late. Josselin, drowned in his blood, covered with the shades of death, reclined his head, and closed his eyes: the Christians took him up in their arms, and carried him to the field where their companions defended Matilda; there they untied his armour, and perceived, with terror, that the whole point of a lance yet remained in his breast. One of his attendants examined his wounds, and did not despair of his cure if he could extract the pike; he made some efforts, the pain of which re-

called Montmorency to his senses, and he opened his eyes; all his friends were grieving around him: at a little distance, Matilda, pale, dismayed, was intermixing her tears with the juice of herbs, which she squeezed to prepare the first dressing. Montmorency saw her, and entreated her to approach; she came, her face bathed in tears, and all her features bearing the marks of profound sorrow. She held out her hand to the hero; he pressed it to his lips, uttered some words in a low voice, and added afterwards: "She alone shall know my secret; I will not carry it entire to the grave." Matilda's sobs increased; she wished to speak, and could only articulate in a heart-broken voice—"O magnanimous hero, are you to be taken from us!—Am I to cost *you* your life!" "Ah," my fate is better than I could hope; I die in your presence, but I must have lived far from you." His attendant interrupted him; he wished to try to extricate the piece of steel; Montmorency stopped him: "Waste but a moment," said he; "my life will probably quit me with this steel, and I have need yet of a few minutes of existence." He then lowered his voice, and said to the Princess, "Before the throne of divine mercy, where I am going to appear, I shall pray for Malek Adhel's conversion; may he become a Christian! may you be happy! These are my last wishes. One day you will tell him of them, and both together shed some tears to my memory: I shall behold your happiness, and not be jealous of it, for envy is not to be found in heaven." The Princess, much affected, fell on her knees, exclaiming, "O thou most generous of men! if the Christians lose you, what will become of their army! What will become of me, when the whole camp, in dismay, will call me to account for your life, reproach me with your death, and deplore, daily, the interrupted work of the conquest of Jerusalem, which your arm alone could achieve!" At these words the grief of the knights broke out universally. One exclaimed: "O holy

Temple! remain in the dust, for Montmorency will not raise thee." Another said, "Blooming flower, thou hast fallen before thy time, and yet in thy bud thou hast left all glories much below thine." With a feeble and inarticulate voice Josselin replied; "If it be true that a little glory has illustrated my early years—if honour were my law, and religion my guide—if I die true to my engagements, and the God of my Fathers—my fame will not expire in my grave; it will live in the breasts of heroes, and perhaps, madam, in yours." "Always!" said Matilda, placing Josselin's hand on her heart, and raising her eyes to heaven, to call it to witness her sincerity. "Now," continued he, "let no remorse disturb your fair destinies, for I owe you more happiness from that single word than the whole world could have offered me without you." Then turning to the Christians, "Noble and generous friends," said he, "if you do not see too much pride in the request, you will raise my tomb before Ptolemais, so that it may be trodden on to approach its ramparts; perhaps the Infidels will not dare to pass it." "We swear it, illustrious knight," exclaimed the knights, unanimously; "if we should have the misfortune to lose thee, thy tomb, raised opposite the superb city thou hast conquered, will serve as a shield to protect it, and from thy grave thou wilt defend us still." Josselin smiled with gratitude, then, placing his hand on his breast, he looked at his squire, and said: "Is it not this steel that makes thee uneasy, and that thou wishest to extract?"—"Yes," replied the squire, "and may my hand not tremble in the operation!" "If thou want only a firm and steady hand," replied his master, "mine will not tremble:" and, tearing out instantly the steel that lay in his bosom, he added, "when we receive it in defence of religion and innocence, it does not harm." But that sudden and violent effort, joined to those he had made to speak, made his blood flow again copiously, and exhausted his little remaining strength; his pale lips murmured a last farewell,

and then closed for ever ! His eyes were no more to behold the light ; his cold hands lay lifeless by ; his blood coagulated and stopped ; the tears of gratitude and friendship bathed but an inanimate corpse, and the soul of a hero had taken its flight.

The Princess enfolded her head in a mourning veil, and heaved deep sighs : so many sorrows threatened to break her heart. Still she recalled some strength, in order to pay her duties to the remains of the great man whose death she had caused : they had laid him out on a funeral bed, constructed hastily with the colours and lances his arm had taken from the Infidels in this last action : his beauteous head had reclined on one side, and his jet black hair seemed to shine with an additional gloss on his pale and cold brow. All the knights, with dejected looks, tears in their eyes, and their pikes reversed, wept the irreparable loss, and a leader who left Malek Adhel matchless on the earth. Followed by all her women, the Princess approached the hero's couch, shed valuable perfumes on his hair, crowned them with flowers, and threw over his cold remains a black crape bathed in her tears ; then, kneeling down with all her attendants, they sang one of those sacred hymns that seem destined to attend the souls of mortals from the terrestrial to the heavenly abode, where the choir of angels receive and conduct it to the Almighty's feet.

After having employed the remainder of the day in paying due funeral honours, the knights proceeded on the next towards Ptolemais : they approached the camp sorrowfully ; for, though they were bringing back the English Princess, they had lost her deliverer, and, though Richard was going to bless them for his sister's return, the lamentations of Philip Augustus were sure to haunt them by incessantly asking, " What is become of Montmorency ? what have you done with my hero ? "

Soon, from the crusaders' camp, they recognised the brilliant motto on the shields of the Knights of the Virgin : Richard and Lusignan rushed forward to

meet them.—Philip Augustus followed : Bérengère regretted that the dignity of her sex and rank did not allow her to attend them, and know a moment sooner whether she was to behold her sister again. The archbishop of Tyre, at the foot of the altar, waited, in pious anxiety, for the instant when he should learn whether he was to offer up to God his humble resignation on the absence of Matilda, or thanks and blessings for her return.

Enguerrand of Fiennes was the first knight the two Kings met with ; his sorrowful deportment made them shudder :—Richard exclaimed : “ The Infidels have detained my sister ! ” “ The English Princess is returning with us,” replied Enguerrand ; “ in a few moments she will be in the arms of her brother.” “ How ! she follows you ! ” exclaimed Lusignan ; “ you have snatched that glorious prize from the Infidels, and profound sorrow seems imprinted on your countenance ! ” Enguerrand made no reply, and cast sorrowful looks towards the earth. The two Kings, astonished at his silence, preserved it also, not daring to interrogate the warrior on a misfortune, the extent of which they could easily guess, since the joy of Matilda’s return could not make him forget it : meanwhile, they sought within themselves what might be the greatest misfortune that could befall the Christians, not having any longer the taking of Jerusalem to dread, and they thought of Montmorency’s death. That fear struck them both at the same moment ; it made the intrepid Richard change colour. Lusignan, envious of any glory that eclipsed his own, was less affected at the loss, and preserved the strength to utter the great name of Montmorency. Enguerrand put one knee on the ground, with one hand pointing to the advancing procession, and with the other to heaven : Richard remained motionless. In vain did he begin to distinguish his sister’s palanquin ; he did not draw near, feeling no longer, at such a moment, the strength of being happy ; but, on perceiving Philip Augustus, he ex-

claimed, "O sire, was it with tears I was to announce to you my sister's return! Assuredly I hold her very dear, but I would not have paid for her release the price it costs us." Philip Augustus that instant perceived the young Matilda advancing slowly towards her brother, and a little farther off a bier covered with a pall, bearing the coat of arms of Montmorency: he shuddered—staggered; his grief was too poignant to allow him to salute the Princess; without taking any notice of her, he retired into his tent, there to hide his regrets and tears. Matilda received sorrowfully the embraces of her brother: that bier, on which the greatest of heroes was lying, seemed to follow her only to damp with tears the joy of her return. She entered the camp, meeting none but dejected and sorrowful looks, which durst not even admire her beauty, when they beheld by her side the end of all that was illustrious on the earth, and the cold remains of glory.

The next day with great pomp they celebrated the funeral obsequies: the various nations assembled in the camp were all present at the ceremony: all had tied a funeral scarf round their colours. But one in particular resembled no other, and less by the lilies displayed on their banners were the French recognised, than by the profound grief that appeared on their countenances; they wept in Montmorency not only a hero snatched away at the flower of his age, whose valour was the firmest bulwark of the faith, but a hero whose glory reflected on them too, and gave their nation a preponderance they must lose with him. They walked slowly, their arms reversed; while at their head Philip Augustus, deeply engaged in thought, was already preparing to quit that ill-fated land which had swallowed up the object of his fondest hopes, and whose rising exploits had already reflected so much splendour on his reign.

Matilda appeared at the ceremony: she had quitted her religious habit to put on a long mourning robe; a black gauze veil covered her head, and her

golden hair appeared through the transparent tissue. Pale, sad, and timid, but handsomer from this cause, men wondered to see so young a beauty shedding so many tears; hence she might have been taken for the morning flower on which in a fine spring dawn the dew had dropped its tears.

The old knights admired in the melancholy of her looks a sort of purity which commanded their respect; and the young ones felt their hearts disturbed by the mixture of sensibility they perceived in them.

At the distance of half a league from Ptolemais, at the foot of a little eminence and the entrance of a grove of sycamores, the remains of Montmorency were deposited. They covered his tomb with the numberless spoils of his last victory, and, at the sight of so many banners, shields, and armours, taken from the Infidels by one hand only and in a single engagement, those who best knew that nothing was impossible for the valour of Montmorency yet wondered, and asked each other: "How did he perish, he who could thus overturn whole armies?" Philip Augustus drew near the grave, placed the point of his sword in it, and said: "Brave and dear Montmorency, I would give the half of my kingdom to redeem thy life—I would give the other half to revenge thy fall! Perish the Infidels who have murdered thee by opposing the whole of their united forces to the single might of thy arm! let them to the last die to appease thy shade! O ye, who surround me, Christians of all nations, swear with me to spare no Mussulman; and you, madam," continued he, addressing Matilda, who was prostrate near the grave, "you who can send up wishes only, but whose wishes must be received by the Almighty like those of angels, entreat that his thunder may immolate to your deliverer, the greatest and most illustrious among the empire of the Crescent!" "Sire," replied the virgin, raising on him her eyes drowned in tears, "there never was a more noble and generous soul than Montmorency's;

allow me therefore not to form other wishes than his, and to ask of God only to fulfil those the hero is addressing to him at this moment." She said, and the recollection of Montmorency's last words in behalf of Malek Adhel increased her emotion, and gave her prayers such a look of fervour, that Philip Augustus and almost every one present entertained no doubt that in weeping Montmorency, she wept more than the hero.

The day had elapsed, the kings retired, the crowd returned to the camp and to Ptolemais; but the priests remained near the grave. The night put no stop to their prayers.—Religion yet consoles the cold remains the world has forgotten; Religion will never cease to weep over those the world is going to forget. Constant, invariable, Religion remains when all passes, outlives time, transient sentiments, and vain friendships, and by that august character distinguishes herself from all that is human, shows us its source, and teaches us that, amidst terrestrial things, she alone is not of this earth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BERENGERE was impatient to talk of her benefactor, and hear whether Matilda had always remained indifferent to his professions: she was not long before she began to inquire. Scarcely had she pronounced the name of Malek Adhel, when the emotion of the Princess became visible, but she made no answer: the Queen insisted, and in order to obtain her sister's confidence, showed her a heart where too much indulgence prevailed; she went so far as to say, that, were she in her place her choice would soon be made. Matilda blushed at being so fully discovered, and perhaps she would have confessed all her secret wishes to the Queen, had she not been afraid they would reach the ear of Richard; but, although she loved and honoured her brother, she feared him too much to endure the thought of his ever becoming the confidant of her weakness.

After a long pause, with eyes downcast and a blush, she said to the Queen: "Since your departure from Damietta, I have experienced from Malek Adhel proofs of such pure, delicate, and ardent affection, that I must have had a very ungrateful heart, had I not been moved by them; I have been affected, therefore, deeply too; perhaps too much so, the Prelate will tell me; and it is only after I have been with him, sister, that I shall be sure my gratitude has not gone too far, and that I may speak of it to you without a blush."

O candour of early years! then thou art altered, and already has the fatal influence of passion tarnished thy pure lustre! Alas! the Princess knew well that her gratitude had gone too far; she had not forgotten her promise to Malek Adhel never to belong to any but him; her choice was then fix

ed, and the Queen was not wrong in her conjecture—but how could she venture to tell her so? and to own that the object of her affection knew also that her choice was made?

In considering all she had to own, the virgin began to grow alarmed at what she had done. How could she compose her mind to show herself to the Archbishop of Tyre so different from what she was on her arrival in Egypt—he who had then seen her seized, at the sight of a Mussulman, with that holy terror which a christian soul experiences at the idea of a demon! What would he say, on finding she was united with that same Mussulman by the most tender bonds heaven and earth ever established among mankind! Alas! when Malek Adhel was entreating at her feet, that she would become his, she thought then she did very little in giving him a mere promise only, but now she had to reveal it, she began to feel its importance and temerity. Without doubt on recollection of the past, and of the dreadful scenes in the Desert, she did not find herself very guilty; but the Prelate could neither see those particulars nor those scenes, or at least he would see them very differently.—Yet she was so humble, she feared so little to accuse herself, she would hear his reproaches with so much meekness, that surely it was not pride that kept her back. Ah! could she but be certain that the Archbishop's first order would not be to banish from her so dear an idea, if she could hope he would permit her still to love—free from that fear, no other should hinder her: the Archbishop would already have read in her heart, he would know what Malek Adhel was to her, and, were he to blame her, she would shun him no more, since talking of her repentance was but talking of her love. But she knew the Prelate's prudence and severity; accustomed to submit to his commands, she knew not how she could resist them: but, if he ordered her to banish her tenderness, she knew still less how to obey. Tormented by this uncertainty, she shunned the opportunities of being alone with him, and, spite

of the voice of her conscience, she delayed still a conversation which he seemed desirous of; the better to succeed, she lived less retired, appeared abroad more, and scarcely ever left the Queen.

Since Bérengère's return to the camp, she had kept a brilliant and numerous court, where all who were most illustrious among the sovereigns and knights deemed it an honour to be introduced: there Matilda appeared, and from that moment all the beauties who adorned the court became but beauties of the second rank. Matilda eclipsed them all, and obtained universal homage.

She was no longer that severe virgin who shunned the eyes of men. I mentioned the secret motive that made her avoid solitude, and that difference of conduct gave rise to an idea that she would give up the project of religious engagements; besides, the sentiment she harboured in her heart giving her deportment something more interesting, the respect she used to inspire formerly gave way to more lively sentiments. No longer did men see in her a saint destined for heaven, but a woman created for the happiness and ornament of the world, and they began to love her because they suspected she might be loved.

The King of Naples, Bohemond of Antioch, Raymond of Tripoli, the Duke of Athens, and above all the King of Jerusalem, exhausted all their cares to attract her attention. When the bustle of war allowed them to breathe, the camp exhibited the sight of tournaments and other festivals, of which the English Princess was the object, and all those noble rivals wished for victory only to receive the rewards of valour and skill from so fair a hand. But amidst so many homages, Matilda distinguished none: she carried every where a settled sorrow that was only dispelled in the company of the old Count Hugh of Tiberiad. Hugh had been for many years a prisoner in Saladin's court; he knew Malek Adhel, and had fastened the spurs and bestowed the arms of Knights on the Prince. Hugh

loved him for his valour, his generosity, and all those virtues that made him an accomplished Prince. He owed him his liberty, that of his numerous family, and his treasures, which Adhel had caused to be restored to him; therefore, he never spoke of his benefactor but with a fire and an enthusiasm which accounted for the pleasure Matilda found in hearing him. The same cause which made her prefer Count Hugh's company, led her to assist at the tournaments. There Malek Adhel's name was often repeated, for the Saracens approached without fear during the time of truce, and often entered the lists with the Christians under the walls of Ptolemais: the two champions proceeded to blows after having harangued each other, and the vanquished was made a prisoner of war or redeemed. Familiarity thus crept in among them, and became such at last, that the Christians often danced to the sound of Arabian instruments, and sang in their turns to the dance of the Arabs. This extreme liberty supplied the Princess with opportunities of talking of Malek Adhel, and inquiring for news of him; but her hopes were always deceived: all the Saracens she spoke to, less anxious than her about the Prince's fate, were no better informed of it.

One day, however, at one of the most brilliant fêtes that had yet been given since her return, on a sudden, at the entrance of the camp, an Arab appeared mounted on a superb courser; his deportment was noble and lofty, and the visor of his helmet down. He proposed to break a lance with the two first champions who would do him that honour, and asked, as the price of his victory, the privilege of paying his respects to the English Princess, and, retire afterwards, without being known. The challenge was accepted, and Matilda requested to make choice among the Christians of those who should fight the Infidel: a secret instinct made her select the weakest warriors, and at her voice the Prince of Galilea and the Count of Jaffa came to enter the lists. The Arab ran round the course, came back

upon them, broke the lance of the first, threw down the other, and approached on his prancing steed the balcony where Matilda sat, scarcely able to contain the emotion of her heart at the sight of the unknown, as if she had a presentiment whom he had come from. Lusignan, who was standing by her, grew indignant at the facility of the Arab's victory, and disposed himself to go and fight him in his turn; but Matilda prevented it. "Sire," said she, "the conditions of the combat are fulfilled; a new race would be an infringement, and honour will not allow it." Lusignan stopt, impatient of being detained, and particularly by the Princess; meanwhile, all the witnesses came into Matilda's opinion, and agreed the victor ought to obtain the price of his triumph. The Arab then gave his steed into the care of the camp equerries, and, ascending the steps that led up to Matilda's balcony, he bent one knee on the ground, bowed very low, kissed the border of her robe, and rising again said in a low voice: "Malek Adhel has conquered Saladin's army at Cairo; he is now in Cesarea: he sends me to you, for he could not live in the uncertainty of your fate.—I am Kaled." On hearing these words, the virgin blushed—was disturbed; she tried to speak, but her voice failed her, and the Arab was already far off when she recovered herself. The joy at what she had just heard, the regret at having given no answer, agitated her so violently, that all eyes were fixed upon her. The Queen smiled, and took hold of her hand: the Archbishop looked at her sternly; Richard came, and asked her, "Sister, has that Infidel told you his name?"—"If he had done so, Sire," replied she with inexpressible confusion, "and had requested of me to preserve it secret, should I be free to tell it you?"—"As your brother and your King, I might perhaps demand it," replied Richard;—"But as the most gallant knight in the world, you will not ask it," interrupted Philip Augustus eagerly; "and who here can wonder that the most beautiful person in the world

should receive the homage of all the nations in the universe?"—Richard smiled, and turning round to his sister, whose embarrassment augmented more and more, he said, "Why do you colour thus, Matilda? Such timidity might be suitable when, on leaving your convent, the world and men appeared before you for the first time; but now that you have crossed the ocean and the deserts; that the greatest heroes have laid down their lives at your feet; that our enemies themselves, vanquished by your charms, bring their homage even into our camp, and that the King of France, on seeing you so handsome, finds their temerity excusable; you must assume a little more confidence, and better endure the looks you know so well how to attract."

This discourse was not likely to diminish Matilda's emotion. Unable to answer her brother, she was casting on the Queen a supplicating glance, seemingly entreating her to come to her assistance. Bérengère understood her, and, rising instantly, said she was going to retire; the Princess took hold of her hand, and followed her. Lusignan begged of Richard permission to attend them to the cars that were to take them back to Ptolemais: he obtained this with ease, and, offering the Princess his arm, said in a low voice: "Now, madam, that the conditions of the combat are fulfilled, may I not, without infringing on the laws of honour, and risking your displeasure, attack the happy unknown, whose victory I envy much less than the interest he seemed to inspire you with?" "Sire," replied the Princess with some pride, "my brother himself has not dared to say I showed any interest; he only spoke of my embarrassment. As to the unknown knight, if you can overtake him, I have no right to hinder you from trying his prowess."—"I will overtake him, madam, and triumph over him, were he Malek Adhel himself!" Matilda looked at him with an air of doubt, and he added angrily, "Does your Highness think him invincible

then?"—"It seems to me," replied she smiling, "that, till this day, it is the only reproach the Christians ever had to make him."

As she finished these words, she entered into the Queen's car. Lusignan, now alone, reflected on the tone in which she had pronounced the name of Malek Adhel, and from that moment he began to think that Montmorency's death had not freed him of the most formidable of his rivals. Love and ambition made him wish to obtain the hand of Matilda; Richard loved him well, and had promised to support his rights: but that was not enough; it required that Richard should love him well enough to force his sister to give him her hand; because, once personally interested in his cause, he would encounter all obstacles to restore the throne of Jerusalem to him he had named his brother. Lusignan felt that this alliance gave him the only chance of reconquering his kingdom, and he shuddered at the idea of the offers which had been made to Malek Adhel; not but that his friendship would prove of invaluable advantage to the Christians, while it would be death to all his hopes, and therefore he only looked upon it as the greatest of all calamities. Thus tormented by his uneasiness, he walked alone and pensive on the shore, seeking by what means he could prevail on Richard. He did not speak to him of his grief; he left to his looks that care, and avoided with affectation the world and its pleasures, to conceal himself in gloomy and solitary places. Richard grew alarmed at the change; he went to meet his brother in arms, and inquired the cause of his silence. "My friend is unhappy," said he to him, "and my friend leaves me?" Lusignan sighed, and gave him to understand that delicacy forbade his imparting his grief to him alone who had a right to dispel it. The brave Richard demanded a sincere confession; and Lusignan, as if overcome by the power of friendship, named Matilda, and fell at the King's feet.—"Come to my arms, my brother!" exclaimed Richard; "long ago has

my heart given thee that title ; my sister's hand shall confirm it."—"August Monarch," replied Lusignan, "you, whose great heart is incapable of weakness, will you understand the weakness of mine? I owe you every thing ; you have made me triumph over a proud rival ; you are to restore me my crown ; but, unless to so many favours you join the hand of Matilda, leave me to my fate, for glory and my kingdom would not console me for her loss !"—On hearing these words, Richard interrupted him abruptly, reproaching him with the doubt he seemed to entertain of his sincerity, and pledged himself, before the year had revolved, to place both Jerusalem and Matilda in his possession. Lusignan's heart leaped with joy : he received the King's engagement, and still said, "you who can do every thing, illustrious monarch, can you dispose of Matilda's heart ?"—"If it be yet free," replied Richard, "she will let me direct her choice, and I am pretty certain no one has engaged her affections already."—"In the soul of a virgin, secrets of such a nature are hidden so deep," resumed Lusignan, "that it is very difficult to penetrate into them."—Richard engaged he should succeed ; nor did he think he promised too much ; for, accustomed as he was to see all bend before him, he fancied, as soon as he should desire it, Matilda would unveil to him her inmost thoughts.

On the same day, Richard, being alone in the Princess's apartment, with the Queen and the Archbishop of Tyre, spoke to her in these words."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"SISTER, when on the day of great Montmorency's obsequies, I saw you put on a mourning habit, I applauded your conduct, and approved that mark of public regard to the memory of your deliverer ; but, if you prolong these signs of sorrow, the world might be led to think there was something more than gratitude in your regrets." "Should it be thought so, Sire," replied she, "I will quit them this very day, and resume my humble habit." "No, it is not this you are to adopt now," interrupted he warmly ; "but the time is come to have an explanation with you on that point.

"Since your arrival in the camp, I have observed you appear abroad without reluctance, and even that you seem to neglect a little those pious exercises which formerly engaged the whole of your time ; this change, I own, has given me the hope of seeing you renounce your intended profession ; not but I respect the vocation you are going to embrace, but the virtues of a young person of your rank ought to shine in a higher sphere, and your destinies call you rather to mount a throne than to live in retirement. I see here a crowd of Princes striving to approach you : your hand is the object of all their wishes : among them the King of Jerusalem ranks the first ; but neither his merit, nor the friendship I bear him, seems to move you, and your indifference is the same to all. I know that at Damietta your pride did not satisfy itself ; the Archbishop and the Queen have both told me, that the rare and brilliant qualities of Prince Adhel did not hinder your rejecting his addresses with the coldest disdain. Is, then, your heart inaccessible, sister, and can you love no one ?" "What then," replied Matilda, blushing, "does your majesty re-

proach me with my indifference? Would you have approved my not rejecting a Mussulman's proffered love?" "Had the merit of Saladin's brother made some impression on you," replied Richard, gravely, "I should have been but little surprised, and not much afflicted; certain that your reason and piety would easily have triumphed over such an inclination. I might have hoped, that, if an Infidel had succeeded to move your heart, a christian Prince honoured with my friendship, introduced and recommended by me, would have been still more successful." "And perhaps your hopes might have been deceived," replied Matilda with some emotion: "I know not what fate heaven has reserved for my lot; but, if it were possible I should ever make a choice, it would be in vain to attempt to make me forget it. I have not a heart that can love twice." "If you are endowed with so much constancy," replied the King, smiling, "I ought to thank heaven for your indifference to Malek Adhel; for, most assuredly, whatever be my tenderness for you, I would rather see you deprived of life, than partial to that Mussulman. But speak to me sincerely, my sister; is it true that, among the princes and knights who surround you, none have appeared to you amiable enough to induce you to give up the cloister?" "No," replied Matilda, "not one has produced that effect." "Thus you still persist in the design of consecrating yourself to God?" At that question the Princess's countenance was tinged with a deep blush; she cast her eyes to the ground, and remained silent. "You make no answer, Matilda, and seem at a loss: if it is not your partiality to a religious life that make you averse to marriage, what can be your motive?" Instead of answering, Matilda wiped, in silence, two or three tears that were stealing down her cheeks, in spite of herself. The King then added: "I see that a strange secret oppresses your heart; I do not ask the confession of it from your mouth, for I respect a virgin's modesty;

but, accustomed to open your mind freely to the holy Prelate who is listening to us, and I imagine already acquainted with the sentiment that affects you, I beg you will allow him to inform me." "Since her Highness's return, sire," replied the Prelate, gravely, "she has not once condescended to send for me ; and her inward dispositions are no better known to me than to your majesty!"—"What do I hear?" exclaimed Richard with surprise ; "after her long exile among the Infidels, the pious Matilda had nothing to tell you—that her first care, on arriving hither, has not been to prepare herself to receive the bread of life?—She, who formerly thought herself guilty when she passed a single week without asking absolution for faults that an angel would not have had to blush at?" "The Princess, since her return," answered the Prelate, "has regularly attended all our ceremonies, but she has not participated of any." "Can I believe what you tell me?" interrupted the King ; "what, then, can be the cause of such a change?—You are silent still, Matilda, and your looks, full of confusion, dare not raise themselves on me ; but that same confusion, and those tears stealing down your cheeks, inform me that the time of repentance is come, and that you will not any longer preserve a silence, which, if it lasted, might give rise to strange suspicions.—I leave you with the good Prelate : speak to him, my sister ; and may he learn nothing that should alter the tenderness I have always shown for you, and make me repent the consent I gave to your journey to Palestine!" These last words were pronounced in so stern a voice, that Matilda was frightened : Bérengère offered to draw near to console her, but Richard would not suffer it ; and taking the Queen with him, he left the Archbishop of Tyre tête-à-tête with Matilda.

Scarcely were they alone, when, with downcast eyes and a faltering voice, she said to him : "I know not, my Father, what suspicions the King has conceived, nor whether you share in them too."—

"Daughter," interrupted the Prelate, "what do you mean by this? Is it not enough to remain silent thus? would you wish to deceive me?—But do not flatter yourself to succeed: I know you; I have read in that heart full of weakness, in that heart which you would not close against me were I not to find guilt there, in that heart that has forgotten its God to give itself up to an Infidel!"—"My Father," said Matilda, much disturbed, "that Infidel is he who has restored the Queen to her husband, who has broken my chains and yours, and whose virtues, admired throughout the East, have often been admired by the Christians and yourself too." "Yes, my daughter, I know all that," answered the Archbishop: "I know Malek Adhel, and I know what trials I left you exposed to: it required undoubtedly, a great share of virtue to withstand them; I thought you capable of it. I daily addressed prayers to the Almighty in your favour, and I hoped to see you again only to hail your glorious triumph.—God has not deemed it proper to give me so great a joy: you see, daughter, the tears my error cost me; they can never dry up." "O my Father," exclaimed the Princess, moved to the last degree on seeing tears flowing in abundance down the venerable face of the Prelate, "your words pierce my soul; without doubt I have been guilty, but, if you knew what strange trials I have endured, if you knew the dangers Malek Adhel has saved me from, and the sacrifices he has made, perhaps compassion would succeed contempt."—"I do not despise you, my daughter, for I know the Almighty does not call all his creatures to victory, but he opens to all the way of repentance: if you have been like those who only believe for a time, and withdraw as soon as the hour of temptation is at hand, detest your weakness, grieve, and return to your God; your heart, swollen by the storms of passion, will grow calm in his bosom, and there alone will find that peace it would seek in vain in the love of a creature." Matilda

kneled down before the Archbishop, and, hiding in her hands her face bathed in tears and flushed with confusion, said: "My Father, deign to hear me—it is time the terrible secret that consumes me, should unburthen itself in your breast;—but what terms shall I employ for such a confession! how can I tell you that a promise solemnly sworn, secret bonds, nay duty even, bind me to Malek Adhel!" She said, and bent her humble brow on the Prelate's knees. "My God!" exclaimed he, "what bitterness didst thou reserve for my old age! That proud and chaste Matilda—that virgin, the model of virgins, has been a Mussulman's prey!" "What do you say, my Father?" interrupted the Princess eagerly. "I am not so guilty but that your suspicions may offend me yet: in the dreary waste of the Desert, where I was abandoned with Malek Adhel, where he had just made a sacrifice of his life for me, where I remained alone with him, I have loved, I have promised!—these are all my crimes. My Father, I thought no more to see the land of the living, death was hovering round our heads, Malek Adhel was expiring by my side: in giving him the name of *husband*, he consented to take that of *Christian*, to follow me before the Almighty's throne!" "Merciful God, confirm my hope!" exclaimed the Prelate in a loud voice: "my daughter, you can still look on heaven without blushing!" "My Father, I think I can," replied the Princess modestly.—"Fall on your knees, my daughter," interrupted the Archbishop for the second time, "and adore the goodness that has saved you." Matilda prostrated herself, blessing God, but blessing Malek Adhel also: for it was as much to his respect, she thought, she owed her salvation, as to the strength the Almighty had given her. Still there was in that sentiment something too tender to venture to let it appear before the Archbishop, and escape the lips of a virgin; it remained, therefore, whole within her heart, without her mo-

desty even allowing her to see too near all the love it contained.

After a pause, the Prelate said to her: "My daughter, repeat those extraordinary words; and say, when did Malek become a Christian?"—At the moment when he thought he was dying, my Father." "And, on recovering has he abjured the light?" "Had you been near him, my Father, had your eloquence opened to him the source of divine grace, had he been told that the faith of Christ did not oblige him to betray his country—but I, a timid ignorant creature, what could I say to him? Meanwhile, the Almighty knows it, how much the hope of making a Christian of him has influenced me, and given strength to my tenderness."—"If, through my cares, I could ever see the word of life descend and thrive in the soul of that Prince," exclaimed the Prelate, "I would ask of God no other glory and comfort than to bless your nuptials and to die." "My Father," said she then, with an interesting confusion, "if Malek Adhel were a Christian, would you permit me to love him?"—"I would, undoubtedly," replied he vehemently, "and employ all my zeal to induce Richard to permit you also."—"And why should it require all your zeal to induce him? My brother is the enemy of error only, and not of Malek Adhel's person."—"That Prince has often been the object of the King's admiration; but, were he a Christian, perhaps he would hesitate about giving him your hand, for he has almost engaged it already."—"Engaged it!" interrupted the Princess eagerly; then she went on with that calmness security gives, "My Father, that rash promise does not alarm me much, for my heart belongs to me alone; none have the right to dispose of it, and I swear it shall never belong to any one but God or Malek Adhel! If God speak, I will obey; but obey him only! he alone can take me from the hero to whom I owe every thing; man never shall!" The Archbishop looked at her with surprise, for her manner had a stamp of resolution and firmness he did not

think her capable of; meanwhile, on recollection of the situations she must have been in with Malek Adhel, he thought there must be great sources of resistance in her soul, and that, having to oppose against men and circumstances the same courage she had displayed against love, they must expect to find her immoveable. After a long pause, the Prelate said to her, "Daughter, with the heart you bear, and the temper of Richard, if Malek Adhel do not embrace our faith, great misfortunes must ultimately assail you."—"Great, indeed," replied she, "if he do not change his faith! Except that, which would destroy him for ever, I can bear all others."—"My child," said the Archbishop, with that ardent charity that made his distinctive character, and towards which he had turned all his passions, "if in the sincerity of your soul you think you can form some hopes of the Prince's conversion, do not delay to inform me; I will go, and through all obstacles bring this great work to perfection." My Father, it is true that Malek Adhel has refused to follow me hither; but, when I parted from him at Cairo, Saladin threatened, and he was going to fight him."—"Malek Adhel fight Saladin!" exclaimed the Archbishop: "O unexpected miracle! O Providence, these are thy works?" "My Father, he was resolved upon fighting," continued the Princess, "I know he has fought, conquered, and that now he is in Cesarea."—"Daughter," replied the Archbishop, "you will tell me some day what invincible power acquaints you with his actions, and how long since this strange intelligence has reached you: now I must hasten to reveal it to our chiefs! it may turn to advantage for our arms!"—"Are you going to discover all to the King?" inquired Matilda with emotion. "Shall I be forced to blush at a sentiment he will probably disapprove? Yet, my Father, if you think I have deserved that shame, I am ready to encounter it."—"No, my daughter, you deserve none," replied the Prelate, looking at her with kindness: "if you have

evinced some weakness, you have also obtained great victories. I will show you to Richard such as you are, such as you will be always; he shall learn that, moved with the virtues of a great Prince, thankful for the dangers he saved you from, seduced particularly by the hope of bringing him over to the true faith, you have given way to a sentiment of preference, but such a sentiment as virtue does not blush at, as your sex's dignity is not offended at, and as religion can always triumph over."

He said, and quitting the Princess, went into the King's apartment.

CHAPTER XXX.

ON his entrance, the Archbishop found Richard with the King of Jerusalem and the Duke of Burgundy, to whom he was speaking with much vehemence. As soon as he perceived the Prelate, he turned to him, observing that the French army had lost its chief, and that Philip Augustus had sailed for Europe, leaving the Duke of Burgundy to fill his place.—The Archbishop knew it already, the King of France had entrusted him with the secret; for such was the influence of his high virtues, that the most powerful monarchs consulted him in all their undertakings, and sought his approbation before they thought them just. Meanwhile, Richard was uneasy at the departure of his young and brilliant rival; he feared his ambition, and suspected him of intending to carry his arms over to England during his absence. The Prelate rejected a doubt so injurious in the following terms: “With his courage and power he might indeed do much; but he will never undertake that which is not great and magnanimous. Let us therefore allow him to go and quell the disturbances which prevail in his vast kingdom, and instead of accusing, let us rather pity him, that he will not behold Jerusalem. A new favour of Providence seems to open the way before us. The two lions who defended it are at war; Saladin and Malek Adhel are no longer united; their armies have fought at Cairo; that of the Sultan has been defeated. His brother after having conquered has shut himself up in Cesarea; and, if we trust to appearances, it is not with a view to defend that city against us, but to assist us in defending it against his brother.”—These words caused a vast surprise in the minds of the two Kings and the Duke, and this last exclaimed, “that the

time was come to send an embassy to Malek Adhel, and offer him any terms he might prescribe." Lusignan spoke loudly against this opinion. Was it not clear that the hand of the Princess Matilda would be the first price he would demand; and was an Infidel's alliance of so much importance, that, to obtain it, they should sacrifice what they had most valuable?" "If you recollect that Infidel is Malek Adhel," replied the Duke of Burgundy, "I defy you to imagine any thing more fortunate for our cause than to see him embrace it; and as to the sacrifice, if I venture to speak my mind, I do not think the Princess would think it one."—"Do you suspect my sister of having had the weakness of loving a Mussulman?" exclaimed Richard, angrily.—"Would it be one, sire," said the Prelate, "to have acknowledged Malek Adhel's great virtues? to have wished to bring him over to your cause, in opening his eyes to the light of Christianity? and if, in return for so noble a conquest, your sister had promised her hand."—"My sister cannot have promised her hand," interrupted Richard with anger; "she knows too well her duties and my rights, to have engaged herself thus. I alone dispose of her, and have done it already. Had she persisted in her religious engagements, I should not have interfered between heaven and her; but, since she has given them up, Lusignan shall be her husband, and she shall have no other!" At these words the Duke of Burgundy ventured to represent to the King, how fatal that resolution might prove to the Christian interest. "It would be so much so, sire," exclaimed he, "that, if Malek Adhel embrace our faith and demand your sister, you will see the whole council of Princes, the whole camp, all Christendom, entreating you to consent to the most advantageous alliance the Princess can possibly form for the interest of the faith; and you will not resist it."—"And why should not the King resist?" exclaimed Lusignan loudly. "Has he not around him warriors whose

valour equals that of Malek Adhel, and can we not conquer without that Mussulman? Ah! could but my own ardour animate the whole camp, with what scorn should we not reject the assistance of an Infidel, and show him how little occasion we have for it!" "Lusignan," said the Archbishop sternly, "is it not enough to have lost a kingdom, to temper your swelling pride, and keep you within the bounds of humility? Is it not enough for interests merely terrestrial to have fostered in the camp that bloody quarrel which threatened the cause of heaven with ruin? Is it not enough to have been confirmed in a title and a dignity that you perhaps did not deserve, since you had suffered yourself to be stripped of it? Must you force the King of England to keep a promise so contrary to the interest of the faith, and which you would be very guilty not to disengage him, from this very instant?" "My Father," exclaimed Richard with impetuosity, "are you not going beyond what your functions allow—and does it become you to establish yourself a judge between Lusignan and me?" "It becomes me," resumed the Archbishop, in a grave and commanding tone, "to defend religion against whoever would hurt her cause; it becomes me to support innocence and weakness against whoever would oppress them: and, if in public I never deviated yet from the respect due to crowned heads, who are like the images of God on earth, it becomes me in private to speak to them as men—men unfortunately replete with weakness and errors, and who too often refuse to know and hear the voice of that God whom they represent. To you, Richard, I venture to declare, that, if, abusing your title of Monarch and Brother, you should tyrannize over the heart of the Princess Matilda, I will take up her defence against you! and you, Lusignan, if the interest of a blind passion should close your eyes against greater ones; if, forcing Richard to keep the promise his imprudent friendship made you, you should induce him to reject

an alliance that might be the means of restoring the whole city to us one day sooner ; know that my duty will force me to declare you unworthy to rule over it, and that I never yet betrayed my duty !” As he finished these words, the Prelate bowed to the two Kings, and withdrew.

“ What signify the rashness of his zeal and his obstinate prejudices !” exclaimed Lusignan : “ what avail his vain menaces and those of the united council ! All that would not appeal me in the least, were I secure of your resolutions.” Richard replied, with a sort of indignation, “ do you mistrust my word then ?” Seeing him offended, Lusignan threw himself into his arms, and said : “ Pardon thy brother ; pity him ; judge of his love by his fault, and do not punish him for having doubted thy faith.”—“ No more of that,” replied Richard ; “ other concerns call us. Malek Adhel is at Cæsarea ; let us ascertain his intentions : if they be such as we are told, if it be true that he has rebelled against Saladin, in marching part of our troops, they will be able to surround the enemy, take advantage of their guard, and open the road of victory to our whole army.”

The Duke of Burgundy approved the resolution, and Lusignan not daring to oppose it, in less than an hour the council was summoned. Richard spoke the first ; he laid before the Princes the events which had taken place at Cairo, and did not conceal the hope they had of bringing over Malek Adhel to the Christian cause ; he wanted to add his own opinion in that respect, but that now was not possible. The hope he had just infused spread a joy through the council that wanted to display itself, and with a unanimous voice they exclaimed, that no price was too great to purchase the advantage of such an auxiliary ! The Bishops, supported by the Pope’s legate, maintained, that Malek Adhel’s conversion being of infinitely more importance to the Christians than the conquest of several kingdoms, whoever should oppose the granting of any condi-

tions that Prince might demand, ought to be looked upon as criminal before God and man. On hearing this, Lusignan arose angrily, and replied, that it was a shame that Christians should seem to attach to an Infidel's conversion the gain of the sacred cause they had taken up. "What then," exclaimed he, "do we rely so little on God and our own courage, that we dare not hope for victory, unless Malek Adhel be with us? And are we so degenerate as not to find in our army heroes equal to him? Montmorency is no more, it is true; but Richard is living yet. If Philip Augustus has left us, the Duke of Burgundy remains; and you, illustrious Count de St. Paul, you Esmengard of Aass, you noble chief of the Knights of Hospitality, you who never retired before an enemy, do you not blush to see Christians raising the valour of an Infidel above yours, and granting to his protection what they would perhaps deny to your zeal? In short, I will demand of you all, young and brave heroes, who have sworn to defend beauty in distress at the expense of your lives, to be commanded at last by a Mussulman, will you suffer that the Princess of England should be sacrificed to him?" He could not proceed: from all parts of the assembly, the Princes who were aspiring to Matilda's hand, arose indignantly, exclaiming, "that they never would permit her to become the prey of an Infidel!" The Archbishop of Tyre then made a sign that he was going to speak, and respect sealed every tongue. "It seems to me," said he, "that the King of Jerusalem has ill understood, and still worse interpreted, the intentions of the party who, in this meeting, have pronounced in favour of Malek Adhel. God forbid that we should wish to see Christians commanded by an Infidel, or wish to offer the august Princess of Britain such a husband: but Malek Adhel is no longer an Infidel. From a foe as he was, he becomes the strongest champion of our sacred enterprise; and, raised by the glory of baptism far above the splendour of his birth, he becomes deser-

ving of all the rewards we can possibly bestow upon him. Meanwhile, if the hand of the Princess should be what he demands, I hear it exclaimed on all sides that she ought not to be sacrificed; no, surely she ought not; but is not the advantage of Christianity the first wish of that virtuous and chaste Princess? All that religion can require of her, religion will obtain; and I am the first to specify, that, if Malek Adhel were to demand her hand, it should be granted only with her own free consent."

The Council assented unanimously; and on that occasion, as well as every other, the moment the Prelate had done speaking, all seemed of the same opinion.

"Now," said the Duke of Burgundy, our first care ought to be, to send part of our troops to Cesarea, to ascertain Malek Adhel's real intentions; the second to elect the chief who shall lead them, and such an honour would undoubtedly be warmly disputed, if it were possible, in the absence of Philip Augustus, to bestow it on any other than Richard."

He said, and suddenly the acclamations of the assembly announced the joy such an illustrious choice inspired.

Lusignan demanded to follow the King of England to Cesarea; but his wishes met with the strongest opposition. It was said that the camp being likely to be attacked by Saladin's army, during the absence of Richard, Lusignan ought to remain to defend it. The Prelate supported that opinion, and the Christians never adopted one contrary to his advice.

Proud, and rejoiced at the mark of esteem and confidence he had just received from all the Christian Princes, Richard would not delay his departure for a single day. He announced that in a few hours he should be far away from Ptolemais; and then proceeded to the camp to select the soldiers he wished to take. He talked to them, communicated his projects, exalted the glory they would reap from the conquest of Cesarea, and hinted to

them the hope of being assisted in the enterprise by Malek Adhel himself. The whole army exclaimed that there was no longer any enemy to combat, any city capable of making resistance, if Malek Adhel left the Musselmen. Richard wondered at the impression the news had produced ; it raised Malek Adhel's glory so high, that his own pride was wounded. His chief hope was to be looked upon as the greatest captain of the age : in disputing with him that title, Philip Augustus had incurred his aversion, and was he to yield to a Saracen that pre-eminence he would not grant the monarch of the first Christian empire ? The troops he was going to lead had testified less joy and confidence at having him for their chief, than at having no longer Malek Adhel for their enemy. That thought filled his heart with bitterness ; and from that day the engagements his friendship had contracted with Lusignan were sealed with his aversion against Malek Adhel. His heart oppressed, he returned to his tent to put on his armour. While the tender Bérengère was helping him on with it, and bathing it with her tears, he broke out into menaces against Malek Adhel. The Queen supposed they proceeded from an apprehension of being vanquished by the Prince, and, in endeavouring to soothe him, she irritated him the more ; she recounted the hero's kind cares, and described all the advantages attached to the hope of seeing him embrace the Christian cause ; she said, in fine, that, were he to remain true to Saladin, and to prove the victor, she should feel no uneasiness, as he had promised to spare her husband's life. At this word the King expressed his anger and scorn. To be spared by Malek Adhel seemed to him a mortal insult ; and, unable to contain his anger, he replied to the Queen, that, if he heard another word in the Prince's favour, he should be led to suppose she had not been with him blamelessly ! Shocked at what she heard, Bérengère found no expression to justify herself from such an aspersion ; and Richard, ashamed at

having cast it, but too angry to repent, passed into Matilda's apartment, bearing with him the regret of a fault which was for him a new ground of hatred against Malek Adhel.

He found his sister kneeling before her crucifix, plunged in deep meditations; she raised her head, and started on beholding the armed warrior, whom she did not immediately recognise. The King stopped at some distance, and said gloomily, "Sister, I am setting off for Cesarea; I am going to surprise the city—perhaps to take possession of it. I am told the Prince who commands there is disposed to assist us. I am farther told, and from you probably the Archbishop has received the intelligence, that he has already raised the standard of rebellion at Cairo. I will not decide whether that conduct be dictated by a sense of honour, and whether religion ought to pride herself on a conquest she obtains from love and from a traitor; I will not consider how you might receive the addresses of a Prince who could only unite himself to you by breaking through the ties of blood and of his country;—all this imports me but little. The only objects deserving of my attention are the triumph of the cross, and fidelity to my engagements. I have promised to restore Jerusalem to the Christians;—I will keep my word: I have promised Lusignan to make you ascend his throne;—you shall ascend it!—In this I will neither know nor consult your inclinations;—the daughters of Kings have none: the will of their parents and the interests of their country alone rule their destinies." "Sire," interrupted the virgin in a trembling voice, "my engagements, my cloister"—"There can be no cloister in the case now," exclaimed he sharply; "so celebrated a beauty has lost the right of devoting herself to obscurity, and the splendour of a throne will scarcely be able to equal that of your name;—that of Jerusalem awaits you, to which the conquest of Cesarea will open the way. If Prince Adhel consent to smooch it, I will accept his assist-

ance ; but, should your hand be the price he sets upon it, remember well, that, were the whole council of Crusaders to engage you to accept it, your brother forbids you. Such a conversion can only be respectable, as far as it is pure and disinterested. If the Prince be truly a Christian, he has no need of reward ; if he be not, will you be his ?—Let therefore his assistance be unconditional ; if not, let him remain in his errors ; we will do without him.—With arms in my hand, I will combat his blindness ; happy by his death if I deliver the Christians of their most formidable enemy, and if I can esteem my sister enough to be certain, that, attached as she is to her faith, she will renounce an Infidel without reluctance.”

As he finished these words, he looked at Matilda more kindly, and went out without waiting for an answer. The unfortunate, left alone, wept, and turned aside from the contemplation of a futurity that might offer her the dreadful image of her brother plunging the homicide steel into Malek Adhel's breast—Malek Adhel's ! who, on her account, would not perhaps defend himself. Soon the noise of the trumpets and drums, which announced the march of the army, caused her tears to flow plentifully. The pious Archbishop, whose charity could at a distance guess the grief of the unhappy girl, came to console her ; on seeing him, she raised her hands to heaven, and exclaimed, “ My Father ! O my Father ! ” She now stopped, ashamed of a passion the excess of which made her blush, and which, instead of growing weaker from obstacles, seemed but to increase with them. The Prelate beheld her despair, and, although he blamed it, he thought still more of soothing it ; and said to her that if Malek Adhel perished in his errors, she must give him up ; but he oftener repeated, that if he changed his faith, she might love him. Too pious not to address some reproaches to her on the imprudence of her affection, he could only pity her when she accused herself, repented, and asked of

God to fill up her whole soul. But in vain did religion resume her empire; she could not destroy that of love, and the struggle became more terrible. In a timid voice the sad victim revealed all her griefs, and the Archbishop, moved at the sight of the bleeding wounds of her distracted heart, forgot she was guilty; nay, to afford her consolation, he was the first to speak of Malek Adhel's conversion. Matilda told him her brother's orders—those cruel orders which left her no hope, were even heaven to move the Prince's heart. The Archbishop threw a veil over all these complaints of love; he listened to those only that concerned religion, and which religion purified. Richard's resolutions now became the subject of several conversations with Matilda, and he promised to neglect nothing to change them. Thus the Prelate revived the hopes of the Princess, who, seeing him daily raising his venerable hands to heaven, to implore the hero's conversion, ventured to expect all from his prayers; and, filled with gratitude, reproached herself for having so long concealed her pains from him who had become her only comforter. She renounced the world, appeared no more at court, and preferred to her solitude those moments when the Prelate consented to hear her: his severity naturally rejected confessions of that tender sort, but his religion induced him joyfully to hear all that could make him hope a great miracle was approaching, and his charity was fired at the idea of acquiring a new son to the church. Matilda sometimes said to him, "My Father, Malek Adhel never resembled other Mahomedans, who scorn and insult the Christians. You have yourself observed with what kindness he treats them.—If he does not believe in the sacred name of Christ, he reveres it at least; and his mouth has never uttered a word that could give offence to Christianity.—Ah! surely it is much more out of attachment for his brother than for Mahomet, that he has hitherto rejected baptism. If he thought my baptism false or dangerous, would he

not have endeavoured to eradicate it from my mind : how often, on the contrary, and at times when my religion most rejected his love, has he not seemed astonished at its sanctity and power ; in short, had we died in the Desert, he would have died a Christian.—O my Father, he is ready to hear you, ready to believe you, and perhaps only a few of your instructions are wanting to make the light of truth shine on him at once.”

Meanwhile, days elapsed, and no news came from Richard.—The same silence prevailed with respect to Malek Adhel. In vain did Matilda, forgetting her natural timidity, multiply questions which might have endangered her secret ; she remained still in ignorance. Often was she observed kneeling on the marble steps of the altar, plunged in deep meditation, seeing nothing—hearing nothing of all that passed around her ; none durst interrupt her then, except the Archbishop, who, knowing her well, approached, and said, “ Daughter, daughter, what thought engages you so long and so deeply ? Think on it well. If like the successors of Aaron, you carry foreign fire into the tabernacle ; if human love alone leads and keeps you there ; if, far from governing your recollections, you give them free license ; daughter, you are still a victim, no longer for the mercy, but for the wrath and vengeance of God.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

TWO great armies were marching to Cesarea. The hero who commanded in the city, and the battles that were on the point of taking place there, rendered it at that moment the most important object in the East. While, on the sea-side Richard had reached a woody hill, whence he could easily distinguish the high towers of Cesarea, Saladin on the opposite side, had arrived under the city walls; and Malek Adhel, informed of his brother's approach, was preparing to meet him. In the mean time the Christians, observing the Sultan's numerous army spreading over the plain, availed themselves of their concealment to watch in silence the resolution Malek Adhel was going to adopt, and seize on some favourable opportunity of rushing on their enemies; but the distance allowed them only to observe the general movements of the troops—the partial ones escaped them; they could not distinguish Saladin advancing angrily towards the city-gates, nor Malek Adhel opening them with submission. That mark of obedience did not appease the Sultan; the rebellion at Cairo was yet too present to his mind.—He wondered, however, at Malek Adhel's timidity; he was ashamed of it for his sake.—“In losing his virtue he has lost his courage too,” said he to himself; and, without condescending to cast his eyes on a brother he no longer esteemed, exclaimed, “Soldiers, seize upon the rebel, and let your swords crush him with the weight of my wrath!” On hearing that cruel order, his troops remained motionless and dismayed; but those of Malek Adhel, who had heard it, flew to the assistance of their leader, and snatched him away before the eyes of the Sultan. Saladin, in a rage, drew his scimitar, and commanded his soldiers to follow him; those of the Prince, without

waiting for his orders, nor considering the inferiority of numbers, sprang forward with such impetuosity, that the enemy were soon repulsed, and the proud Sultan himself obliged to fall back. From the summit of their hill, the Christians had perceived the engagement; they no longer doubted but Malek Adhel was in a state of open rebellion, fancied the time was come to join him, and, all rushing at once on the rear of the Sultan's army, surprised, dispersed and cut it to pieces. Saladin, attacked on all sides, could not stop the terror that prevailed among the soldiers; their ranks gave way, and yielded without fighting.—In a few moments the Christians made so many prisoners, that they almost grew uneasy at their numbers. Richard said to the Prince of Tarentum, "Take fifteen hundred men with you, and conduct our prisoners to the camp. Announce my victory; let our brethren rejoice, for Malek Adhel is ours; and this evening the name of Christ will be adored in Cesarea." The Prince of Tarentum obeyed; he loaded the Saracens with chains, and took the road to Ptolemais: while he was going away, Malek Adhel had seen from the top of the walls the standard of the Cross displayed afar, the defeat of Saladin, and the flight of his army. Suddenly the voice of blood and of his country resounded in his heart. He did not hesitate; he traversed with rapidity the thickest squadrons, sought his brother, found him, and said, "Now Saladin, let us be friends, for the enemy is at hand; let us fight them, and after the victory thou wilt have time enough to see me die." Without waiting for his brother's reply, he dashed through the thinned ranks, rallied the soldiers, placed himself at their head, and, wherever he showed himself, changed the fortune of the day. Moved, astonished, Saladin followed him with his eye. Disturbed with a thousand thoughts, he kept asking himself what he should believe, and whether he was to behold a traitor in Malek Adhel, or the firmest prop of his throne. While plunged in this uncertainty, he thought neither of attacking nor

defending himself. The right wing of the Christians had just been broken through by Malek Adhel; during his pursuit, the left availed itself of that moment to rush all at once on the Sultan. By the yellow and black feather that rose on his helmet, Richard recognised him, and sprang forward, exclaiming, "Come to me Christians! Saladin is taken!" At the sight of such imminent danger, the Sultan recovered from his stupor; his formidable sword cleft Richard's shield in two, but the intrepid monarch was not to be dismayed; he threw away the fragments of his shield, with one hand seized Saladin's horse by the bridle, and with the other held the point of his sword to his breast, exclaiming, "Surrender, Saladin!" "I would not even surrender my corpse," replied the Sultan, "while my brother could save it from thy hand!"—"What talkest thou of thy brother?" said Richard; "thy brother is with us." "My brother is with me!" interrupted he; then suddenly, in a thundering voice, he cried out, "Fly to me Malek Adhel!—the Christians are victors!" In the thickest of the fray, Malek Adhel heard him; he ran, flew, treading on broken crests and bruised breast-plates; Saladin saw him near, and, strong with his invincible support, he no longer defended himself;—he attacked. The bold Richard was nearly exposed to the same danger the Sultan had incurred just before; but that thought did not make him fall back, for he well knew that, brilliant as his crown was, it was not an empty title, but only a pledge of glory; and glory was so dear to him, that, even purchased with death, he loved it still. At that instant the shock of the two armies parted the two brothers again; but Malek Adhel was following obstinately the rash warrior who had threatened Saladin's life. Richard, who saw him, broke loose from the men who were dragging him away with them, and returned alone back on the Prince. A dreadful combat began; already their blood had tinged their armour. Astonished at the resistance they opposed to one another, they increased their

efforts ; Richard's horse fell under him, but he recovered himself so quickly, that his fall did not interrupt the fight. Malek Adhel raised his sword, and discharged such furious blows on the head of his adversary, that the King's helmet broke, and left him for a moment in dismay. But, far from pursuing his victory, Malek Adhel stopped on a sudden : he looked at Richard, and finding a resemblance that made his heart palpitate, said to him, " What is thy name, invincible knight ? Thy features, thy valour, tell me thou must be very dear to me !"—" I am thy foe !" replied Richard ferociously ; " thy eternal foe !—I had triumphed over thy brother ; victory was mine !—Thou hast snatched it from me ; thou hast conquered, and spared me ! There are no favours which can make me forget such affronts."—" Well ! proud Richard," exclaimed the Prince, deeply affected, " for thou alone canst hold such language, if thou thinkest to hate me because I have been faithful to my country, I shall bear with regret the weight of thy hatred ; but it will not hinder me from revering in thee the greatest king in the universe, and loving thee as the august brother of her to whom I have consecrated my life." He would have said more, had he not perceived the Mahomedan troops rushing towards them. Instantly he gave Richard his horse, and said hastily, " Away, noble monarch ! In the name of thy wife, thy sister, do not delay. Against so many enemies all the efforts of thy valour would not prevent thy losing thy life without utility for thy cause." The King saw it well, and that determined him. The interest of the Christians commanded him not to abandon them ; to him belonged to collect and save their scattered remains ; his duty of chief prevailed over his courage, and honour over pride. But as he flew he shed tears of rage, and his hatred against Malek Adhel increased much more from the shame of having been put to flight before him, than from the injury that Prince had done the Christians by remaining true to Saladin.

While the English hero joined his troops again, rallied, and flew away with them, Saladin pursued and slaughtered, without mercy, all the Christians he could overtake. Malek Adhel spared them, and made prisoners only; the image of Matilda, which haunted him during the carnage, seemed to protect all the Christians. Now that he had done all for friendship, he began to regret he had not done more for love. Discouraged by the struggles that the most imperious of passions and the most sacred of duties caused in his heart, seeing no hope of futurity, not feeling the strength to sacrifice either of them, he stopped sorrowfully among the dead that strewed the ground; and those dim eyes, those pallid lips, those hearts that had ceased to palpitate, did not raise his compassion. Their fate appeared to him sweet, compared with the cruel torments that distracted him.—“They are at rest!” said he to himself, casting his eyes around on the heap of bodies; and he thought less of pitying them for having lost life, than of envying their happiness in having to suffer no more!

Meanwhile, the enemy had disappeared, tranquillity was restored, and Saladin giving up the pursuit, returned, followed by numerous stands of colours and flags, tattered and covered with blood. The sad and victorious Adhel advanced towards his brother: he summoned round him all the soldiers who had supported him in his rebellion at Cairo, and those who had left Metchoub to follow him; and said to them, “do you swear by the Prophet and his divine Alkoran to obey all my commands!”—“We swear it!” exclaimed they.—“Follow my example then!” replied he; “fall at your sovereign’s feet, and, whatever be the punishment he may inflict on us, let us submit, for we have deserved it.—Brother,” continued he, bending one knee to the ground before Saladin, and presenting him with his scimitar, “I offer thee my head!—take thy victim, thy vengeance is just; but pardon all those brave warriors, the supports of *thy empire* and power:—my example alone misled

them, my death will bring them back to their duty." At these words the fierce Sultan was affected : he wiped the tears that started from his eyes, and could not comprehend what was that unknown emotion which, weighing on his heart, made his voice falter. Unable to speak, he opened his arms to his brother—Malek Adhel rushed into them. "Ah, Saladin!" said he, "couldst thou believe that the friend of thy infancy ever had the will or the thought of betraying thee?" "I now see it myself, yet I could not believe it!" exclaimed the Sultan; "and, Malek Adhel, if thou hadst errors, I forget them—mayst thou also forget the vengeance I wanted to take!" He now pressed to his breast a brother whom he loved. Moved at the sight of their sacred friendship, the army celebrated their reconciliation by joyful acclamations; and, by Saladin's orders, his own and Malek Adhel's soldiers were intermixed together, in order that he might for ever remain ignorant who were those Saracens who had dared to bear arms against him.

The two brothers were equally impatient to meet alone; they interrogated each other, and came to explanations. Saladin heard the account of all that had passed at Damietta; he saw that Malek Adhel had wished to obey; that it was contrary to his orders that the Queen had gone, and the Princess remained; but, when he was told that a slave, charged to inform him of that great event, had been despatched, he exclaimed, "I have not seen him! No message from thee ever reached me; and, I own, that strange silence, which confirmed all Metchoub's accusations, was the only circumstance that could induce me to believe them." Then Malek Adhel understood the cause of his brother's anger: all appearances had shown him so guilty, that, in pardoning without having heard him, he thought Saladin had evinced much indulgence. At the request of the Sultan, he related the scenes in the Desert, and his noble sincerity did not deny that, at the moment of death,

Matilda's tears had made him untrue to Mahomet.—“But,” added he, “if the seductions of that heavenly maid have been able to shake my faith, I can swear to thee, that they shall not alter my zeal for my country, or fidelity towards thee!”—“Hear!” replied the Sultan; “I have heard thee, and found thee innocent. If the Queen of England have been sent back to the christian camp, I can only accuse the artifice of the Princess Matilda.—In sending this last back, thou hast spared me a cruelty that would have stained my name. In fine, in defending thyself against Metchoub, thou hast more than preserved my empire,—thou hast preserved my friend! It would have been sweet to me to have something to forgive thee, but I can find nothing to pardon.—What do I say! was it not at the very moment I had commanded thy death, that thou hast saved my army and my life!—I know but one way to requite thee—it is to give thee the beauty thou lovest. Accept the throne of Jerusalem; place the Princess of England by thy side; let her bring thee Ptolemais for her dowry; and let the Crusaders, contented with seeing a Princess of their blood reigning in Judea, return at last to Europe.—Thou wilt still remain the servant of Mahomet, the friend of thy brother. United in minds, in opinion, and glory, the sanctity of our bonds will serve as an example to all nations, and Saladin will then be able to die in peace!” “I know thee so great and generous,” replied Malek Adhel, in the effusion of his gratitude, “that what thou sayest to me now affects, but does not surprise, me.—Saladin, I accept thy gifts, in order that they may bind me closer, if possible, to my interest and my duties.—I accept the throne thou offerest me, in order to be the first of thy tributaries, and give thee a new pledge of my fidelity, by naming thee my benefactor!”

The Prince wanted to be the bearer of Saladin's proposal to the christian camp, but the Sultan opposed it; he would not permit his brother to debase Mahomedan pride and the splendour of the throne,

by taking the title of an ambassador to christian kings ; he commanded him to select one, among his servants whom he invested with that high dignity, and who was to appear at the camp of Ptolemais surrounded with that oriental pomp, which might perhaps delay his journey, but would better convey an idea of the importance of his mission and the greatness of the sovereign he represented.

CHAP. XXXII.

WHILE the Sultan ordered the preparations of that solemn embassy, so slow according to Matek Adhel's wishes, though he hurried them with all the activity the most violent love could inspire, news of the sudden conquest of Cesarea arrived at the christian camp.

When the Prince of Tarentum entered it with the warlike sound of trumpets, and surrounded by the crowds of captives he was bringing back, Matilda was alone in her oratory.—She heard the noise of the returning army, and her soul was struck with dismay.—She was going to hear what cause Malek Adhel had embraced—all her destiny was there, and the hopes she had entertained till then gave way to apprehensions.—She forgot the Prince's love, the engagements of the Desert—all in short that could tend to make her easy, and only remembered the fortitude with which he twice had parted with her. She accused herself, grew uneasy, knelt down, arose again: at the slightest noise, all her blood rushed to her heart, choked and burnt her; soon she felt it freeze again, and she was ready to faint. Meanwhile, a well-known hand had rapped at the door; it was the Archbishop of Tyre.—She knew not whether she should open it: twice she advanced, twice she fell back in her chair. At last, growing more confident, with a trembling hand and downcast eye, she opened the door to the Archbishop.

"Rejoice, my daughter," said he, "the Christians are victors!"—She looked at him; his bald forehead beamed satisfaction, and she began to hope again; but, before she rejoiced, she waited for the Prelate to tell her something more.—"Your brother has defeated the Infidels," added he, "and by this time Cesarea is ours!"—The virgin made no reply.

The Archbishop had not told her under what colours Malek Adhel had fought ; she feared to show too much love in pronouncing the name that filled her heart ; but spite of the modesty of her silence, her eyes had spoken.—The uncertainty, the anguish, they expressed, had revealed to the Archbishop, that the victory of the Christians was nothing to her without they owed it to Malek Adhel. The Prelate blamed her weakness, and took no compassion on it ; still, as her happiness depended on one word, he did not make her wait for it ; but, wishing to purify Matilda's joy in bringing it back to the idea of God, he added, " Yes, daughter, Richard is master of Cesarea, and the Almighty has moved the heart of Adhel ; —these two great conquests show us his power and his mercy !" —Matilda pulled down her veil ; she felt that the transports of felicity which filled her heart would break out on her countenance, and her modesty blushed to let them be seen. The Archbishop proceeded : " When the Prince of Tarentum left Cesarea, Saladin's army was yet between Malek Adhel and Richard ; but this last, victor on all points, was preparing to pierce through the Sultan's troops, and did not doubt but, as soon as he could reach Malek Adhel, they should fight in concert, ultimately put the Sultan to fight, and hoist up that very day the triumphant standard of the Cross on the walls of Cesarea ! " My God !" exclaimed the Princess, " can I believe what I hear ? can Malek Adhel have fought against his brother, and could love have so much power over him ? " —" Daughter," replied the Prelate, " if he has done so, beware not to attribute it to love ; human passions work no such miracles ; the cause is above ; and, if I wished to announce to you myself that miraculous conversion, it was to prevent your heart wandering in transports of an improper joy, and to warn it not to attach itself so strongly to promised happiness, that it may not be ready to resign it, if it please God to have it so.—And now, my daughter," said he, " you may go and see the Queen ; she is waiting for you."

—You will find the Prince of Tarentum with her, who will acquaint you with farther particulars, and prevent the inquiries your timid modesty would not venture to make.”

Matilda fastened her veil again, adjusted her dress, wiped her tears, and appeared before the Queen, her eyes cast downwards, and her cheeks burning with confusion. At the instant she entered, the Prince of Tarentum advanced respectfully towards her, and Bérangère, taking hold of her hand, said to her, “Sister, to you we owe our thanks for a victory ever memorable in the annals of Christendom.—Subservient to your charms, the noble Malek Adhel embraces our faith and our cause. The report is already spread through the camp; already they attribute to you alone the glory of his conversion, and your two names are so closely joined together, that they seem as if they were never to part again.” —“Yes, madam,” exclaimed the Prince, “assisted by Malek Adhel, the Christians will fly to new conquests; that of the whole Eastern empire will scarcely satisfy their ambition; but they only wish this to offer it you, the only throne worthy your acceptance;—thereon they will place you, with the hero you have given them. The sovereign of those extensive provinces, where now the empire of Satan prevails, you will diffuse on them, from your exalted situation, torrents of that divine light with which the Almighty has filled your heart.” —“Such high destinies,” replied the Princess, extremely affected, “are too much above my hopes.” “And what destinies, what hopes can be above what your marvellous beauty gives you the right to expect?” interrupted the Prince of Tarentum enthusiastically: what hearts can it not inflame? what empires can it not conquer? where was ever a more invincible weapon?”

Such praises wounded Matilda’s modesty.—By her grave and modest deportment, she gave the Prince to understand she wished him to change his language. Fearful he had given her offence, he said no more, and only, at the Queen’s request, resumed, to inform Matilda that the dispositions of Malek Ad-

hel before Cesarea, and his engagement with the Sultan's troops, had made the Christians presume that he favoured their projects. In listening to him, the innocent Matilda entertained hopes dear indeed to her; but which, alas! were to make her happy but for a short time!

The next day the whole court met in the Queen of England's apartments. There the Kings of Jerusalem and Antioch, the Counts of Tripoli and Jaffa, and all the valiant knights who had remained in the camp, deliberated among themselves, whether they should join Richard at Cesarea, and divide with him their share of laurels. Those especially, whom Matilda's charms had fired, burnt with the desire of combatting; for they could not endure the thought that Malek Adhel, reaping all the credit of the victory, should also gain the reward. Corroded with jealousy, pride, and hatred, Lusignan exclaimed, that, whatever might be the conduct of Malek Adhel, he was equally unworthy of the prize he claimed: "And I do not think, madam," added he, looking at Matilda, "that the nobleness of your blood and the purity of your soul will ever allow you to accept for a husband, a man whose belief is hateful to God, and whose conversion were a perfidy!"—Matilda was moved with surprise and indignation; Bérengère was going to answer, but the Prelate did not give her time:—"What do you venture to say, sire?—What impious words have you uttered! What! will you call him a traitor whom God may deign to instruct, and who, abjuring his false Prophet, in order to receive the sacred baptism———" "I beg your pardon, Father," interrupted Lusignan abruptly; "we are talking of honour here, not of religion; and, on this point, allow me to say, I am a better judge than you. The laws of chivalry are not always the same as those of the Church."—"The hero who best knew the sacred laws of chivalry," replied the Princess with some emotion, "the great Montmorency, thought differently from your majesty. Had Malek Adhel been a Christian, he

would have esteemed him above all the kings in the world.—As he died he prayed for his conversion, and had that conversion been criminal, his noble soul would not have asked it of God.”—“ I take no one’s opinion for the rule of mine,” replied Lusignan with arrogance, “ and least of all the last thoughts of a dying man. When all is growing dim and changing its aspect, our sentiments also may change ; but rest assured, madam, that if Montmorency were still living, he would bear no other judgment than mine ; and that, on beholding Malek Adhel fighting on the side of Christians, he would see in him a traitor who has disgraced his former glory by turning his arms against his country and legitimate sovereign ; his voice, like mine, would call him cowardly and perfidious before the world ; and my sword, like his, can well make my words good.” Bérangère, hurt at the manner in which he had spoken of her benefactor, infused a little bitterness in her reply, and said, that, however formidable were his sword, she did not think that the hero, so justly surnamed The Thunderer of War, would be much alarmed at it.—At these words, Lusignan could scarcely contain the violence of his anger, and, without answering the Queen, he turned to Matilda, and said, “ I wonder, I own, to see the Queen of England profess sentiments so opposite to those of her husband, but I should wonder still more, if they were approved by your highness.”—“ Sire,” replied she with conscious dignity, “ if I always prided myself on thinking like the Queen, my sister, I will not cease to join with her, when she openly owns her esteem for the hero who stripped you of your kingdom and perhaps will restore it you.” She had scarcely finished these words, when tumultuous cries were heard in the camp, and broke off the discussion ; at the same instant the doors were thrown open, and Richard appeared all in arms, covered with dirt. His countenance was gloomy, wild ; and he did not even condescend to speak to the Queen, who had rushed forward to meet him. “ O my brother, my brother !”

exclaimed Matilda, in a tremulous voice; and she cast an anxious look behind, to see if Malek Adhel was not following him. All the Princes and chiefs, struck with astonishment, inquired the cause of his return, and why he had returned to Ptolemais when they thought him master of Cesarea.

"I have been defeated!" replied Richard, with an air of consternation, and inwardly swearing deadly hatred against him who forced him to that confession. "What, then," replied the Prince of Tarentum, "has your majesty been repulsed, before you could join Malek Adhel?"—"What do you talk of Malek Adhel!" answered Richard abruptly; "he alone has deceived us, caused our defeat, and ruined our enterprise. I had broken through the whole of Saladin's army; his squadrons scattered about the plain could not avoid the Christians; they were in open flight, and would have met with slavery or death; and, had I had only the Sultan to encounter, he would now have been a captive in Ptolemais, and in a few days we should have taken Jerusalem; but Malek Adhel has snatched victory from me; he appeared suddenly, like an ill-fated star, and the disorder among the enemy ceased; the troops were rallied, the Christians beaten, and, for the first time in his life, Richard took to flight!—O intolerable shame!" continued the proud monarch, striking his forehead with his fists, armed with gauntlets; "O insolent Malek Adhel!—Thy name will ever be my disgrace; and, what fills up the measure of my shame, I have lost the power of depriving thee of life!"—"Brother," exclaimed Lusignan taking hold of his hand, which he held forcibly, "why have you lost it? Has misfortune broken your great soul, and do you mistrust your valour?"—"Led away by my courage," replied Richard, with his usual frankness, "I was on the point of falling into the hands of all the Mussulmen; Malek Adhel saw it, and saved me! I owe to him my liberty—probably my life.—This is the fatal obligation which increases the shame of the affront, in forbidding me to revenge it."—"And

hast thou not a brother here," replied Lusignan, his eyes sparkling with joyful ardour, "who will perish to save thee!—Am I the only one who can feel thy insults, and pay with all his blood the honour of avenging them? Art thou not surrounded by friends who cherish thee, and are now going to swear with me not to lay down their arms till the death of Malek Adhel shall have freed thy glory from the only man who can boast of having seen thee fly?"—These words, spoken designedly, fired Richard with such a rage, that his wonted generosity was silenced; and, pressing his brother in arms to his heart, he exclaimed, "Brave Lusignan, I understand thee, and I promise my sister's hand to the conqueror of Malek Adhel! That instant all the knights and Princes, who aspired to the hand of the Princess, crowded round the King, and raising their swords by common accord, they swore the death of Malek Adhel!—But, at the sight of their sparkling swords, destined to pierce the breast of him the wretched Matilda adored, she turned pale, her eyes closed, and she fell senseless on the floor.

On seeing her condition, Bérengère screamed, and ran to her assistance. Richard started, but did not draw near his sister, and, making a sign to the Queen said, "Send for your women, madam; let them take her away. I will excuse the terrors of a timid virgin, and shall be happy to find there is no other cause for her emotion." "My Father," continued he, addressing the Archbishop, "be kind enough to follow her; when she is able to hear you, you will tell her that you have assured me that her duty was dearer to her than life, and that her first duty is to obey me.—Let her remember, that, if ever heedless of her glory, she hold another language, mine will not allow me to suffer it!" Before he followed the women who were taking Matilda away, the Prelate bowed respectfully to the King, and answered, "I know the Princess of England, sire; I have often perused that pious, submissive, incomparable heart.—There is no sacrifice she *will not* make to religion; there is none but what

she has made, and in vain perhaps would you look round for one who could say as much ; I therefore hold myself answerable to your majesty, that the Princess Matilda's conduct will always do credit to the blood she springs from." " Let her then not forget," resumed the King angrily, " that, to become worthy of it, the weakness she has evinced to-day must be the last of her life ; for, whoever is weak is not of the same blood as Richard !"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHEN a great misfortune falls unexpectedly upon us, we at first remain as if stupified; we see, hear, and feel, nothing; life seems as if suspended; but, scarcely has it resumed its course, when all the pangs of grief rush in at once, and tear us to pieces; we wish to die, and yet fear in dying that our misery should accompany us.

Such was the situation of poor Matilda. "O my sister," said she to the Queen, "let me go hence. I will go to Richard; before all those ferocious warriors, I will fall at his feet; perhaps he will yet be moved, perhaps my prayers will raise his compassion, and they will all retract that dire, that impious oath which threatens the life of him who restored you to your husband!"—"Yes, my child," said the Archbishop, taking both the virgin's hands in his, "pray for him who restored you your liberty, who spared the life of your brother—that is allowed to you, for God has made gratitude our first duty; but, O my daughter, let that sentiment be henceforth the only one that attaches you to Malek Adhel!" The Princess replied only by a torrent of tears; her heart was far from the Prelate's words; for the moment when we fear most for the sake of a beloved object, is that when we love him best; and, on seeing Malek Adhel's life in danger, he had become so dear to her, that she even doubted whether God had the power to eradicate her love. At last, in a heart-rending voice, she said, "O my Father, when I pour out before heaven my prayers and my tears, it is not that he may change my heart, but that he may change that of Malek Adhel's enemies, in order that, no longer alarmed for his life, I may die in peace!"—"You wish to die, Matilda!" interrupted Bérengère, much alarmed.—"My sister,"

replied she, throwing herself into her arms, "I have lost all hope; can you therefore doubt it!"—"Thus," replied the Archbishop sternly, "instead of deploring your ill-timed passion in the bosom of penitence, you wish to crown your errors by a crime?"—"No, my Father, I will not raise on myself the hand of homicide; I will wait till grief has broken all the strings of life; it will not be long, for I have suffered much. I shall die very young, but not so young that I have not waited a time for death!"—"My daughter," replied the Prelate, "shudder lest God should hear you, for death with sin is the most terrible among the stores of his wrath."—"It is that which strikes me with horror," exclaimed Matilda:—"the barbarians! they would take away his life while he yet remains in error, and ruin him to eternity!—Pardon the dreadful thought, my Father, but my mind grows giddy;—I feel that, if Malek Adhel must be rejected by the Almighty, I too wish to be rejected!"—"Hold, wretched child!" exclaimed the Archbishop: "hasten to banish a passion that has taught thee to blaspheme. Do thou, O heaven, forgive her, for this is her first error! Matilda, recall thy virtue, and deplore for ever the acknowledgment that thou couldst prefer a man to thy God!"—"Did I say so, my Father? has my transport gone so far?" exclaimed she, struck with holy terror: "Alas, I am no longer good; I have no honour; religion and duty have lost their empire over this wretched heart, that forsakes all, save the love that fills it, and the remorse by which it is torn."—"Daughter," resumed the Prelate, in a softer tone, "do not abandon yourself to despair, for God can easier forgive than man can offend; he hears our prayers, and reads the disposition of our inmost heart."—"Ah," replied the Princess, much affected, "let him then hear the engagement I make in renouncing Malek Adhel; it shall only be in this perishable life, for God will surely allow me to meet him in the

next."—"He will even allow you to ask it of him," replied the Archbishop, "and perhaps not without effect; but you must live, Matilda, and permit yourself to indulge neither in complaints nor murmurs; you must bear up with your trials; love them even, and beware not to call death to terminate them; for death is the wish of weakness, and virtue alone can live in misfortune." "Since my prayers can be efficacious," replied the Princess, "I was very guilty to wish to die. Ah! let the Almighty, on the contrary, deign to prolong the days which he allows me to employ in begging grace for Malek Adhel." "Yea, my child, he permits it; but take care, however, that your heart do not make a wrong use of prayer, to bring before God the interest of your passions."—"Alas!" replied the virgin, "there are no passions in which I wish to shut myself up; and these, the prayers free from all human interests, are worthy surely to reach heaven. My Father, I wish to quit the world, and return to my first engagements. O my revered guide! cover me with the wings of your protection, lead me into that sacred retreat where you wished to conduct the unfortunate Agnes.—Since I have been guilty also, why keep me in the world? why bring obstacles to my repentance?—O, let me but see my brother abjure his unjust hatred, and his blood-thirsty friends cease to pursue Malek Adhel, then shall you see me joyfully quitting this world, where I have known nothing but calamities and weakness."—"Sister," said the Queen, "you never will obtain Richard's permission; his heart and will are bent on your marriage with Lusignan, and he will force you to obey him."—"He will force me!" replied the Princess proudly; "what right has he, what power?"—"His commands will suffice, without doubt," replied Bérengère; "for surely it is impossible to resist those of Richard!"—"On this occasion it is still more impossible to obey!" replied Matilda eagerly.—"Daughter," said the Archbishop, "great fortitude is requisite to resist the commands of Kings." "Ah," replied she, with anguish, and as if driven

by an invincible force, "much less is requisite than to give up him whom we love."

She then reclined her head on her hands, and remained plunged in a deep meditation, during which Bérengère and the Prelate preserved a profound silence. It lasted till the Queen was informed that Richard wished to see her : torn from her reverie, Matilda raised her head ; her countenance was more firm and placid : she took hold of the Queen's hand, and said, "I pray you wait yet a little while. My Father," exclaimed she, "I wish to accompany the Queen, to embrace Richard's knees, to entreat him to act for this once as if I did not exist, as if I never had existed. He has promised my hand to any one who should deprive Malek Adhel of life ; but, from the instant when I shut myself up in the shades of death, my hand will belong to no one ; then the King, having no longer any reward to give, will have no oath to maintain." "Sister," replied Bérengère, "wait a few days : now you would only inflame the King's wrath."—"Will you assist me to sooth him?" answered Matilda ; "You, who are indebted to Malek Adhel's generosity for your husband's life, will you not speak for him?"—"I will, undoubtedly," said the Queen : "but I dread the effects of my attempt, for Richard's anger is terrible ; it increases and inflames itself the more you attempt to allay it ; and the design of changing his will is a temerity he never forgives."—"Hear, Matilda," added the Archbishop ; "do not thus hurry your resolutions.—Remain in peace ; the moment is not come to see your brother.—Remain in peace, I say, for Malek Adhel's life is not in danger. Shut up in the walls of Cæsarea, he is out of our warriors' reach, and it can only be when the Christians lay siege to that city, that the engagement entered into against him can be fulfilled ; that siege, however, is not likely to take place yet. Before then I will speak to the King ; I will do more ; I will speak to Malek Adhel."—"You, my Father?" exclaimed Matilda in a transport of surprise.—"Yes, daughter ; and such is my duty.

If it be true that some shades of light have fallen on the soul of that Prince, God calls me to spread them. His conduct at Cesarea afflicts, but does not discourage me. My daughter, I will hence to Cesarea, present myself before the Infidels, and speak to Malek Adhel."—"My Father," said the Queen, "your charity misleads you; the Infidels will load you with chains, perhaps do more"———"They dare not!" replied the Prelate, filled with divine confidence: "whoever acts for heaven is protected by heaven! God sees my intentions; he will bless them; and, if he should allow my blood to be spilled, it would be to serve as an expiation, and to redeem from sin the soul I am going to restore to him. Happy destiny! which, making me participate in the sufferings of my Redeemer, would also make me partake of his merits, and extol my glory above all the glories of the earth!" In speaking thus, no sentiment of vanity inflated the Archbishop's heart; for religion alone can raise man above humanity, without giving him pride. Matilda fell at his feet, exclaiming: "Holy man, direct my will. God inspires you, and I am ready to obey!"—"Daughter," replied he, with kindness, "promise me not to make any important resolution before my return!"—"I swear it!" answered she solemnly.—"Farewell!" said he: "my child, submit to Providence!" Then, followed by the Queen, he left Matilda's apartment, and repaired to Richard's tent. "Well!" exclaimed the King, on seeing him, "have you disposed my sister to obedience, and will she meet my wishes?"—"Sire," replied the Archbishop, "I have commanded her to suspend her determination until my return."—"And whither are you going?" asked Richard with surprise. "To where heaven directs my duty," replied the Prelate.—"I shall say no more at present; the Queen, however, being acquainted with my secret, I beg your majesty not to insist on your rights, but to suffer her to preserve silence on the subject."

As the Archbishop said these words, he withdrew,

leaving Richard in a state of surprise which for a time stifled his resentment; and, when evening came, the worthy Apostle of Christ, filled with evangelical zeal, left the city, and took the road to Cesarea. Clad in the simplest garments, stripped of the insignia of his dignity, great in the consciousness of his pure intentions, with complacent looks and cheering hopes, he proceeded to fulfil them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OFT in the cool of the evening did Matilda, attended by her women, visit the shore to inhale the refreshing breeze; oftener still did she direct her steps towards Montmorency's tomb; where she dwelt with pleasing recollection on his last wishes towards Malek Adhel, and with confident hope invoked his intercession with the Almighty. How often amidst her reveries did the virgin exclaim in a plaintive voice, "Holy cloister, where my sisters expect me—obscure retreat, where in a happy ignorance of the world, I should have been for ever sheltered from its storms, and have remained insensible to the dangerous influence of love, which now, alas! I feel too deeply."—Thus saying, she leaned over Montmorency's cold ashes, as if to reveal to them alone the errors for which she hoped his interceding spirit would obtain divine forgiveness.

Since the Archbishop's departure, Matilda had avoided all opportunities of meeting her brother, nor had Richard sought them. His warlike ardour prevailed over every other concern; and, till the siege of Cesarea should call on him to display his valour, he daily went to attack the Saracen posts and always returned loaded with spoils. Lusignan constantly attended, and shared the laurel that crowned his victories. Their valour, their exhortations, encouraged the soldiers. Before such heroes, the terror of Malek Adhel's name began to subside, and the Crusaders, fired with hopeful courage, without farther hesitation fixed the time when their united forces should proceed to the attack of Cesarea.

On the eve of that eventful day, Matilda waited on the Queen, to learn tidings of the Archbishop's journey. Both wept together in mournful silence, and in contemplation of the next day's battle. The

image of Richard armed to encounter Malek Adhel alarmed them equally. The Queen, trembling for her husband, and dreading Malek Adhel's valour, entreated God to save Richard; and Matilda, kneeling by her side, exclaimed, "O sister, let us pray for Richard, but let us also pray for those who stand in greater need of heaven's mercy!"

While they thus raised their innocent hands to heaven, the clangour of warlike instruments was heard in the camp, and soon Richard appeared before them, his head uncovered, and eyes sparkling with joy. "Women!" said he to them, "why do you weep, when we defend your faith, and are crowned with victory? My arm has this day destroyed thousands of Saracens, and Lusignan has displayed more than his wonted valour. Followed by a handful of soldiers, we were exploring the woods at the foot of Mount Carmel, hoping that fortune would supply us with some opportunity of showing our courage. We have been successful beyond expectation. A convoy of arms and provision, coming from Jerusalem, supported by three thousand Saracens, was advancing towards Cesarea. "A rich prize!" exclaimed I, looking at Lusignan. "Wilt thou have it?" said he; "I will give it thee.—It is less than I have received from thee, for thou hast promised me thy sister!" He said, and rushed forward; I followed. Astonished at our audacity, the Infidels scarcely made any resistance; they abandoned their treasures: I pursued, and cut them all to pieces. Lusignan took their wealth; which we distributed among the soldiers, and now they ask for more, and demand to attack Cesarea.—To-morrow, to-morrow, will we march there!—Victory is ours, and the blood of the Infidel shall wipe off my shame!"—"O my noble brother!" interrupted Matilda, falling at his feet, "among all the virtues your soul is replete with, is there no room for gratitude?"—"Young virgin," replied he, rather sternly, "do not forget that, since the day when Malek Adhel shed so much christian blood before

Cesarea, all hopes of conversion must have vanished, and that you are not allowed to love him !"—“ Ah sire !” exclaimed she, “ since that day I owe him my brother’s life ! Were it not for his generosity, I should not now embrace your sacred knees. Can your revered commands, hinder me from preserving an eternal gratitude for that favour ?” Moved with the soft manner she had displayed, Richard was about to speak more kindly, when Lusignan, attended by some chosen knights, appeared, and begged the Queen would excuse him, if he presented himself without leave, alleging the anxiety of the knights to pay their homage to the *Lion of England*. He, in his turn, related the King’s victory, spoke of Cesarea, Jerusalem, and the image of so many conquests, the report of which would reach Europe ; thus he fired Richard’s soul with such ardour, that he could scarcely contain it ; and, at such a time, fancying there was nothing above glory, nor any interest more powerful, he did not think to afflict Matilda by saying, “ Sister, the splendour of our triumphs shall reflect on you ; I swear that the conqueror of Cesarea shall receive your hand on the ruins of that smoking city !” Matilda shuddered ; she was on the point of confessing to the King the oath which bound her with Malek Adhel, and her irrevocable determination of quitting the world, and entering the monastery of Mount Carmel ; but, remembering she had promised the Archbishop not to adopt any resolution of importance before his return, she preserved silence ; though it grieved her, lest the King should construe it as an omen favourable to his projects.

Matilda’s silence, which induced a belief that she would accept the conqueror of Cesarea for her husband, surprised the Queen, pleased Richard, and fired the hopes of all those who aspired to obtain her hand. Lusignan, however, exclaimed, that the conqueror of Cesarea was too vague a title ; since, in rushing altogether on the devoted city, a thousand warriors might deserve it.—“ Sire,” continued he, “ the greatest glory in the world is not inferior

to the prize you have proclaimed. We must have a striking, matchless, splendid, victory!"—"Well," interrupted the Duke of Athens, "he whose arm shall first plant the standard of the Cross on the walls of Cesarea will surely deserve it?"—Haugist of Coucy, the bravest of the French knights since the death of Montmorency, answered the Duke, that whoever could bring Saladin in chains to Ptolemais would do more.—"Saladin is not the most formidable enemy of the Christians," replied the proud Lusignan; "it is not from him they have most insults to punish; he has not given the first blow to the city of Jerusalem; he has not dishonoured a Princess of my blood; he has not by false appearances deceived the Christians; he has not, in short, made my brother blush, and it is not him that the victor will reap most glory in destroying!"—"Hear!" interrupted Richard, taking hold of Matilda's hand; "it is then to the conqueror of Malek Adhel that I, for the second time, promise her hand!"—"Say rather to the conqueror of that hero who spared your life!" exclaimed the Princess, indignantly.—But confusion and terror now rushed on her at once; her secret, having escaped thus incautiously before so many witnesses, caused her an inexpressible confusion; she threw herself into the Queen's arms, and Bérengère, who perceived the effect her words had produced on Richard's mind, hastened to appease him, saying, "Forgive, my liege, the excess of her sisterly affection; that alone has hurried Matilda beyond her accustomed reserve; by her tenderness for you, she regulates her gratitude towards Malek Adhel."

Richard gave the Queen credit for having supplied Matilda's imprudence with that interpretation, and feigned to believe it, that he might deprive any other person of the right to speak of it otherwise.—"Sister," said he, "your affection for your brother ought not to misguide your judgment. Follow my example, and remember, that, when I place the interests of religion and my country above gratitude,

you should do so likewise !” Soon after the Queen dismissed her court, and Matilda retired to her apartment.

Overcome with grief, she threw herself on the bed ; but scarcely had sleep taken possession of her senses, when the most horrible phantoms crowded round her couch.—She fancied she saw Malek Adhel dragged in the dust, showing her his blood gushing out of deep wounds, and charging her with having suffered a price to be set on his death ! Thrice she awoke, and endeavoured to banish these terrific images ; thrice she went to sleep again, and found them ! Lusignan too, the cruel Lusignan, was treading Malek Adhel under foot ! She could count his wounds ; she heard him cry out, in a deep sepulchral voice, “ Why didst thou not speak, and confess to thy brother the tie that binds us ? He would have respected it, have stopped the murderers, and I should not have been plunged into everlasting perdition !” On hearing these words, struck with terror, she broke from her sleep, darted from her couch, screamed aloud, and her terrors increased ; for though awake, still the same terrific images haunted her. The deep gloom of night seemed like that of a grave ; the silence that reigned around her like that of death ; a cold dew overspread her chilled limbs.—No, no ! she would not become the accomplice of a murder ; she would not let it be thought her hand was to be the price of Malek Adhel’s blood ! No, no power should detain her ; she would fly to her brother, extend her supplicating hands, and reveal the secrets of her heart ! If it were a shame to own them, to conceal them was a crime, and better to blush before men than before God ! The virgin no longer hesitated ; day-light appeared ; her terror prevailed. She forgot her promise to the Archbishop, or rather thought a superior duty commanded her to forget it ; and, certain that her dreams were a warning from heaven, Matilda fancied she should be guilty of Malek Adhel’s death if she did not obey it.

She left her apartment, presented herself before the guards who watched round Richard’s tent, and

demanded to speak to her brother. Surprised to see her at such an hour, they hesitated; not daring however to stop their monarch's sister, they only warned her that the principal chiefs were already summoned before the King. She scarcely heard them, but passed on, and threw herself at Richard's feet. With him were the Dukes of Bavaria and Burgundy, and the King of Jerusalem.—Surprised on beholding the Princess pale, trembling, her hair loose, and bearing in her eye the terror that had haunted her all night, they ran to raise her up; she pushed them away, pressed the King's knees against her breast, and dismissing all apprehensions, said, "Sire, condescend to hear me, take compassion on my terrors! A dreadful dream has thrice returned to frighten me with its fatal warnings.—I thought I saw Malek Adhel lying in the dust, expiring, covered with wounds, hurled into eternal perdition, and reproaching me with his death, with his irrevocable condemnation! His voice sounded in my ear, and methinks I hear him still utter, 'Matilda, why hast thou hastened my death?—Some days yet, and God perhaps had saved me!—My liege, you have promised my hand to the knight who shall conquer him, and I—I swear immortal hatred against whoever shall give that sacred head the first blow!'" "What do you say, Matilda?" interrupted Richard, fired with rage. She did not allow him time to proceed, but, with her hands extended to heaven in a loud voice, "O my brother, it is no longer time for concealment!—Malek Adhel, to save my life in the Desert, offered the sacrifice of his own! We were both on the point of death: at that awful moment, God alone was my support and my guide; Malek Adhel promised to become a christian! he received my oaths, and I swore never to have another *husband*!" The efforts she had just made to utter these words had exhausted her strength, and she fell again speechless at the King's feet. Lusignan and the Duke of Burgundy hastened to give her assistance; she pushed away

the first; then, leaning on the second, trembling, and with eyes on the ground, waited for the King's answer.

Motionless with astonishment and rage, he looked at his sister, as if unable to believe what she had said. At last he exclaimed: "Execrable engagements! wretch to have taken them! Is it the sister of Richard, the daughter of Henry II. I have heard? What! seduced by a vile Tartar, she chooses him for her husband, and presumes to ask my consent!"—"No, Sire," replied she, with a becoming dignity, "I do not ask it; and to refuse to unite herself with an Infidel, your sister has no need of your command; no! Malek Adhel, a Mahomedan, shall not be my husband! Such is my duty, and I will follow it; but, after such oaths as have bound me to him, my duty commands me still more to renounce any other husband, and devote my whole life to save him, if I can, from everlasting reprobation!—O Sire, I invoke your justice, your equity. After such a confession, can I suffer you to promise my hand to the conqueror of Malek Adhel?"

The King made no answer; he threw himself into an arm chair, and hid his face with his hands. Lusignan drew near Matilda, and in a broken voice, said, "You have pierced my heart, but if my despair cannot affect you, behold that into which you have plunged your brother! Are vanished then all those sweet hopes that cheered our friendship, and fired our valour?—And for what? for a vain engagement, from which the head of the church can easily release you."—"Yes, he can!" exclaimed Richard, starting up on a sudden; "for it was entered into by weakness;—but he could not disengage me from mine, O Lusignan, for that was cemented by honour; hence, since my sister's imprudence has made her no less dear to thee, since thou consentest to forget it."—"Ah! what do you say, sire?" interrupted Lusignan, falling at the feet of Matilda.—"If ever I become possessor of this valuable treasure, I shall then be able to remember nothing, save

to bless the Almighty for the inestimable gift I possess from his munificence and goodness!" Richard now took hold of his sister's hand to place it in that of Lusignan, but Matilda drew it back with terror. The King then said sternly, "Sister, obey! for your pardon is there only." Dismayed with her brother's anger, the timid virgin was raising her beauteous eyes on the Duke of Burgundy, as if to ask his protection, when the Duke of Norfolk, Captain of the King's guard, appeared at the entrance of the tent, and said, "Your Majesty will surely excuse my boldness in interrupting an important conference, when I inform you of a circumstance that astonishes the whole camp. Already had the van of the army begun to file off, when they perceived afar in the plain a standard waving in the air;—soon they knew the arms of the Crescent: a herald is advancing alone; he precedes, as he says, a brilliant embassy, charged with proposals for peace from Saladin; it is to you principally, my liege, the embassy is addressed, and I come to receive your commands."

On hearing these words, Richard, astonished, looked at his Sister, who blushed, and could not conceal her emotion; he then turned round to the Duke of Burgundy and the King of Jerusalem, and observed, that he did not think he could dispense with hearing Saladin's proposals. Lusignan, enraged at the disappointment, replied, that, whatever those proposals might be, he should reject them without giving them a hearing, if the hand of Matilda were to be the condition.—"But your majesty will remember, I hope," replied the Duke of Burgundy, "that your will can be no law to us;—that the interest of the faith ought to go before that of your love, and, in a word, that the council of Princes has alone the right to decide thereon, and send Saladin an answer." The impatient King of Jerusalem was on the point of answering in an offensive tone, and Richard, no less impatient than he, was exclaiming, "He alone would dispose of his

own sister," when the Duke of Bavaria interrupted them in these terms ; " What ! we are yet ignorant of the Sultan's proposals, and already does animosity break out among us ! Let us wait at least till they are known, and esteem each other enough to believe, that the interest of religion alone will dictate our answer." The Duke of Bavaria prevailed ; Lussignan, who perceived Richard himself was adopting that opinion, did not hesitate also to conform to it. Moved with his deference and feigned disinterestedness, Richard grasped his hand affectionately, saying, " You have nothing to fear ;" then he bid Matilda retire, and, turning to the Duke of Norfolk, commanded him to acquaint the Princes and Chiefs of the Army, that the general council was to assemble in an hour, to hear Saladin's proposals.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHO can relate all the hopes which revived in the heart of Matilda! She asked herself what could be the meaning of that solemn embassy from Saladin, and at once guessed Malek Adhel. Amidst her agitations, she wished for the Prelate's return, and grieved at having broken her engagement with him. While she wept, feared, and hoped, her good and faithful Herminia of Leicester came in, and said, that, among the persons who formed the ambassador's train she had recognised one of Malek Adhel's most confidential servants. Matilda interrupted her, and inquired if she had spoken to him. "No," replied Herminia; "the King, your brother, has forbidden all intercourse between the ambassador's train and the Christians, until the council shall have decided on Saladin's terms."

Herminia said no more; Matilda feared to ask about what she was most anxious to know; but the attention with which she had listened, and the solicitude expressed in her looks, sufficiently declared her wishes. The Countess fancied she understood them, but, still concealing it, said, "However secret the Sultan's proposals may be, a report prevails in the camp, that his ambassador Mahomed is charged to demand your highness's hand for Malek Adhel; during two hours has he been before the council, and nothing has yet transpired." Matilda turned her head aside, and concealed her face and emotion with her hands; the Countess remained in silence.

Suddenly a noise of drums and trumpets was heard, and Herminia exclaimed, "The council is over, and the Ambassador is returning to his tent." She then withdrew, and left Matilda alone. The Princess fell on her knees: "O heaven!" said she, "is Malek Adhel thine, and shall Matilda be his?"

—She had not the strength to say more, for her whole destiny was in those few words; she fell back in her chair: to love Malek Adhel was supreme felicity—to love him was the only eternity she asked for! Never had she indulged her sentiments so far; they became a true passion, and her chaste veil was drenched with the tears of love! A sudden noise snatched her from her reverie; she screamed, and hid herself, lest some one should discover her condition, and the secret agitations of her heart. It was the Queen, who, on entering, exclaimed, “In what a state do I find you! you weep when all smile?” Matilda started, raised her head, and looked at her with astonishment. Bérengère drew near, and her countenance beaming with joy, said to her, “Queen of Jerusalem, let me salute you!” “Horrid title!” interrupted Matilda; “Never shall they see me seated on Lusignan’s throne!”—“How say you, sister? it is not Lusignan, but Malek Adhel, who calls you there!” The Princess turned pale—trembled; she could not believe what she heard. The Queen, pressing her hand, added affectionately, “This seems without doubt a prodigy; but, sister, learn there are no prodigies which love cannot accomplish.” She said, looked at her and smiled. Matilda could not smile; too many emotions had rushed on her at once. Astonished at her silence, the Queen said, “What, Matilda, when Providence changes the minds of Kings on your account, and reverses the usual course of things, in order to unite you with the hero of your choice, do you remain confounded, and not return thanks?” These words recalled gratitude into Matilda’s soul, but with it likewise the only idea which could make it lively and boundless. “O my sister!” said she, “you have not yet told me that Malek Adhel is become a Christian!”—“That point remains yet in obscurity,” answered the Queen.—“Ah!” replied she, “do not talk of happiness then, until it be cleared up.” The Queen resumed then: “Matilda, is not your disposition, which banishes

hope, and mistrusts celestial goodness, a mark of ingratitude?"—"Perhaps so," replied Matilda, wiping away her tears. "Read this," added Béren-gère, giving her a paper; "it will tell you that it now depends perhaps on yourself only to change the face of this empire." Matilda took it; it contained Saladin's proposals in these terms.

"In the name of the only God, whose reign is without end, and of his Prophet Mahomet, whom he sent to establish the only true law, we, the most illustrious Sultan, defender and ornament of the faith, King of the Mussulmen, servant of the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, Saladin son of Ayoub, make it known to the Princes, united under the law of Christ, that we have given to the most high and most noble Malek Adhel, our brother, the column of our empire, the kingdom of Jerusalem, all Judea, and many other important cities in Syria; but, that all these extensive states not proving satisfactory, unless the Princess of England reign over them with him, we propose this alliance as the pledge of everlasting peace and amity between the East and West: we consent that a Christian Queen be seated on the throne of Jerusalem, and that by her presence and protection she console the comfortless people, and maintain union between the Mussulmen and the Christians; we only demand that she bring us Ptolemais for her dowry. At this price, we permit her to consecrate the temple of Resurrection (the holy sepulchre) to her own worship; we make restitution of its monasteries, we allow all your pilgrims to visit the holy city, and will preserve inviolable peace and friendship with you; but if you dismiss our embassy with a denial, far from fearing, we will meet you; and God, by his power supreme will give us victory. Decide, then, whether you will have peace or war; and, if God have resolved on your ruin, come! We will march at the head of the different nations who compose our empire, and whom no sea, desert nor obstacle, can impede."

Matilda read the despatch twice with the most profound attention. When she had done, she reclined her head on the Queen's shoulder, and said, sorrowfully, "Do you know what answer the council have sent to these proposals?"—"They at first produced the greatest altercation," replied Béren-gère; "the majority of the council declared in their favour; but the King of Jerusalem rejected them with the most audacious scorn, and Richard supported him: the animosity then increased; cries, threats, insults, were heard; and the Archbishop of Tyre's absence was lamented. The most numerous party were for the Sultan, the most violent against him. Meanwhile, amidst that dreadful agitation, Lusignan suddenly remained silent—all wondered. He drew near to Richard, spoke to him in a low voice, and, demanding to be heard, silence was restored. 'Princes,' said he, 'I am asked to yield up a kingdom; nay, much more, the beauty the King of England had promised to my wishes; great and painful as those sacrifices may be, yet if religion command, I am ready to obey; but, to determine on this, I must be certain that religion really does require it; and how can I do so, unless God proclaim it by the voice of his ministers? I therefore request that the answer to Saladin's proposals may be suspended until the bishops' council, presided by the Pope's legate, have pronounced on this question, viz. whether it be an advantage for Christianity to abandon Jerusalem to a Saracen Prince, and whether a daughter of the royal blood of England may be allowed to swear submission and obedience to an Infidel?'"

"There was in this an appearance of moderation, which reconciled the minds of the council to Lusignan, and his opinion appeared so prudent and disinterested, that it was adopted unanimously. They therefore concluded, that the bishops alone had the right to decide, and until that was done, that a truce should be requested of Saladin. And you may well

imagine, my sister, that, since the point is left at their option, they will not hesitate to accept an alliance which will restore to the true faith a part of its former lustre and power."—"Ah! may Malek Adhel be enlightened!" interrupted the Princess: "I can form no other wish, nor desire any more.—But tell me, sister, do you know whether this embassy is the effect of the Archbishop's presence at Cesarea?"—"I hear nothing of the Prelate," replied the Queen; "it even appears he was not at Cesarea when Mahomed sat off." The Princess raised her hands to heaven with profound melancholy, and asked herself how God could so long delay calling Malek Adhel to himself!

"On returning from the council," resumed Bérengère, "my husband was pensive and silent: he gave me the paper, saying, 'He would soon come and speak to you himself.'—"Sacred powers!" exclaimed Matilda, "this kindness of Richard surely conceals some mystery; but, sister, can the bishops' council be summoned when the Archbishop is away?—Lusignan entreats that he may not be waited for; he dreads that partiality in favour of Malek Adhel, which, in spite of all his piety, the Prelate has not been able to subdue."—"Almighty Ruler!" said the Princess, "when the glory, the light, of thy church has not been able to forbear being interested in favour of that Prince, am I then so guilty in having loved him!" As she uttered these words, the doors were opened, and Richard appeared before them; his looks were uneasy and stern; he paced the room in silence, as if meditating on what he was going to say; at last, stopping before his sister, he said, "Matilda, when I left Europe, it was to come hither, and, in driving the Infidels from the sepulchre of Christ, to restore it to the Christians. I found Lusignan at Cyprus, was moved with his misfortunes, swore to give him back his crown, and that engagement was sealed by friendship and brotherhood in arms.—What do they propose to me now? To break through that holy and sacred bond—to abandon my friend and

brother in his misfortunes, to see him stripped of his rights, and to invest a Saracen Prince with them ! This is not all ;—we are required to restore to the Infidels that Ptolemais purchased with so many toils and so much blood, and to unite our royal sister, the noble offspring of the Plantagenets, to a wandering Arab ! Does honour, proud honour, allow me to endure such affronts ?—What ! throughout Europe it will be said, ‘ Richard, who went into Palestine a formidable conqueror, whose sword was the consolation of Jerusalem and the terror of the East, has shamefully retired at Saladin’s first proposition !’ and shall I suffer it !”——He stopped as if oppressed with rage ; the Queen and the Princess preserved silence. After a pause, he added, “ What the prayers of the whole camp could not have wrung from me, that has Lusignan obtained ; his generosity has not allowed him to mind his own interest, nor suffer it to be defended ; and, if I did yield, I confess it has been to display such heroic generosity in its proper lustre. He has referred to the council of bishops a question which my sword would have better decided, and I have given my assent. So great an example, Matilda, will surely not be lost upon you ; it will teach you all the deference such a sacrifice on my part demands on yours ; it will teach you how far one may bend when public interest requires it ; it will teach you, that, if oaths taken in the name of honour and friendship have yielded to more exalted duties, those wrung from weakness by love, ought yet more to give way ; it will, in short, teach you the only resolution you can adopt, in case the council of bishops should reject the proposed alliance. You will remember, that, having the power to enforce obedience, I have not used it ; and that, after so great an effort over my feelings, if you do not follow my example ; if, far from showing yourself worthy of it, you even hesitate to acknowledge my authority, and the choice I have made for you, there would be no temerity, no ingratitude, which might not be compared with yours !”

He ceased, Matilda cast her eyes downwards, and made no reply. Though affected at some of her brother's expressions, and surprised at Lusignan's apparent generosity, she felt that no circumstance could ever give her the fortitude, or even the will, of accepting any other than Malek Adhel for her husband; but, though she had courage enough to abide invariably by that resolution, she had not sufficient to tell the King so. Bérengère, to spare her the trouble of a silence that became irksome to Richard, asked him, in a timid voice, Whether the council of bishops was to meet soon, or wait for the Archbishop's return? "You, who know," replied he sarcastically, "where he is gone to preach the word of Christ, may tell us, surely, whether the importance of his mission will detain him long; but the secrecy you have promised to observe not allowing you to give us the requisite information, we have been forced to leave it to chance; should, however, the Prelate not be back at the expiration of a week, the council must assemble without him."—He stopped again, looking stedfastly at Matilda, as if waiting for an answer: she was silent, and he continued: "Your hopes are very mute, sister; perhaps it had been better for your fame, had your fears been as much so this morning. You have committed a great imprudence in pledging ~~our~~ faith to Malek Adhel, and a still greater one in owning it publicly; meanwhile, considering your extreme youth and the love I bear you, I may yet pardon you; but, in the rank you hold, remember all eyes are fixed upon you; that one imprudence more can have no excuse, and that the world and I would never forgive you." He retired then, saying he expected to see her with the Queen in the evening. As this was an order she could obey, she, therefore, although reluctantly, went. With a mind disturbed with anxiety and fears, she was forced to hear all the speeches the news of the day gave rise to, and endeavour to answer. Some, filled with admiration of her and Malek Adhel, applauded the proposed alliance and

the triumph of beauty ; others, inquisitive and malicious, sought to guess her secret ; the women looked at her with envy, Richard with coldness, and Béren-gère with compassion. All the knights, who had aspired to obtain her hand, broke out into menaces and complaints ; the bishops, grave and silent, refused to answer any questions relative to the judgment they were to give, and imposed the same reserve on their features as on their discourse. Lusignan, leaning over the back of the Princess's chair, seemed plunged into a deep sorrow, and saw with pleasure that his grief and resignation produced on the spectators the effect he had hoped from them. No man had less native magnanimity than Lusignan, but none better knew how useful it might prove in certain cases. In the morning he had well observed how contrary to his wishes the majority of the council seemed to be, and that, in persisting to reject every arrangement with Saladin, he would alienate men's minds still more ; that Richard alone could not be able to support him against the whole army, and that the safest way was to consent to yield up all his claims. In making this sacrifice spontaneously, he should improve in the esteem of the Crusaders, become dearer to Richard, and perhaps might move the heart of Matilda ; besides, in the sacred council, he would have the advantage of time and intrigue, two engines which he knew so well how to work, that, when he had the opportunity of employing them, he felt himself almost certain of success.

But of all things in the world, nothing is more out of the reach of artifice than a plain honest heart : in such there is a sort of instinctive righteousness that repels fraud, and cannot be won by it. Matilda might well believe in Lusignan's generosity, but she could not be moved by it ; and, even during the profound affliction he exhibited, he inspired her with a reluctance she reproached herself for, perhaps, but which she could not overcome. Leaning over Matilda's seat, he was saying to her, " Ah, madam, had Malek Adhel only demanded of me the resignation

of my crown, and could I but hope such love as mine would suffice to your ambition, one word from you would make me abdicate all my claims."—"Sire," replied she coldly, and without looking at him, "how could Malek Adhel ask you to resign Jerusalem and my hand, since the first is his, and the other my own?" This said, to shun a lover she hated, she arose, and drew near the Queen, who was conversing with the Pope's legate. Lusignan still followed her, and, apprehensive lest she might address some requests to that venerable representative of the head of the Church, he spoke to him in the following terms: "Let your eminence beware of that dangerous beauty, for irresistible eloquence distils from her lips; nay, to indulge in listening to the Princess Matilda, is to be exposed to obey her alone." "You offend us both, sire," replied the Legate gravely; "the Princess is as far from addressing me a request I ought not to listen to, as I am from granting it, if she did."—"And I will add," interrupted Matilda, rather sharply, "that your majesty has but too well taken care to guard against that submission you are talking of; for, in fact, if it were enough to hear me to obey, you would long ago have ceased to address your professions to me."—Lusignan was going to reply, but she would not suffer it: impatient to be left to her own thoughts and hopes, she requested and obtained the Queen's leave to withdraw; and availing herself of it immediately, she retired without condescending to look at Lusignan, who continued entreating her to hear him but a moment longer.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MATILDA retired into her oratory, the windows of which overlooked the ramparts, freely indulging in the new hopes and sentiments she was perhaps on the point of being allowed to entertain without disgrace. She recollected with a blush, but still she recollected, that nuptial pomp which had crowned Bérengère's marriage, that oath of eternal love pronounced with so much joy by the Queen, a joy that now began less to astonish Matilda's innocence; her imagination, diving then beyond the abysses of death, met again with love and Malek Adhel, and lost itself in transports of felicity, the reality of which belongs to heaven alone; of this, however, God has allowed man to conceive, in order that he should not doubt the existence of heaven; but it would be great impiety to think that man's fancy can conceive more than God has done.

For upwards of an hour, she had been indulging in her extatic reveries, when the Countess of Leicester entered, seemingly agitated, and told her that an Arab was at the door, charged with letters from Prince Adhel to her highness. Matilda having desired her to receive them, the Countess added, that he refused to entrust them to her, and would deliver them to the Princess only."—"Show him in, then," replied Matilda, eagerly, "for it is late; the hour when they shut the city gates is almost at hand, and the Arab would be lost if they found him in Ptolemais after that time." Herminia went out, and returned instantly with the Saracen soldier, whose visor was down and deportment mysterious. The Princess spoke to him with some emotion; he made her no answer. Astonished at his silence, which she attributed to the presence of Herminia, *she made her* a sign to withdraw; scarcely was the

Mussulman left alone with her, when he fell at her feet, exclaiming in a voice that reached Matilda's heart, "At last I see her! Matilda is restored to me!"—"Almighty Powers!" interrupted the Princess, alarmed, "if an illusion deceive me—if it be not him that I hear—if my wandering fancy bring before me but a shade—deprive me of life, but not of my error!"

Malek Adhel did not answer; he was too much moved to speak; he threw away his helmet, and showed himself to Matilda; she recognised that face which love had stamped with his image; surprise, joy, struck her to the heart, and, in the transport she experienced, it seemed to her as if she was ceasing to exist. On beholding such emotion, Malek Adhel felt his own increasing to madness; he pressed to his breast the beauty he adored, but Matilda, starting, resisted; for modesty remained, though reason was gone. At that instant, the tolling of a bell, that summoned the Christians to prayers in a neighbouring temple, filled the virgin with holy terror. "Malek Adhel, dost thou hear that voice!" exclaimed she, "it is the voice of God himself!"—"O Matilda!" replied he passionately, "wilt thou, by eternally opposing thy God to my felicity, make me hate him?"—"What didst thou say? I make thee hate him! O my heavenly Father, thou knowest if I ever entreated any other favour than thy being revealed to him!—But speak, Malek Adhel; tell me by what prodigy you happen to be here? Has the Archbishop of Tyre sent you—has he found you in Cesarea—have his words reached your heart?"—"I know not what you mean, Matilda," replied the Prince; "I have not seen the Archbishop; he is not at Cesarea; and not he, but love, has brought me to your feet. No mortal on earth knows of my being here; my brother himself is ignorant of it; the generous, but proud, Saladin would not have permitted that I should experience in this place the disgrace of a delay—but I could not wait far from you for an answer upon which my life depends; I could not deny myself the

happy opportunity of beholding you but for a moment, under the disguise of a private soldier. Unknown even to Mahomed, I came among his train, while the Sultan thinks me engaged in visiting Ascalon and Jaffa."

"You know," said the virgin, colouring, "the answer the Princes have returned to Saladin's proposals?"—"I know," replied he impatiently, "that Lusignan, whose audacity presumes to aspire to your hand, has obtained that the council of your bishops should alone decide on that point; I know too that your brother has declared against me, and that he supports Lusignan's presumptuous claims. Perhaps his influence over the minds of your bishops will dictate their answer; perhaps they will reject Saladin's terms; perhaps they will command you, Matilda, to betray the faith you have sworn to me." He stopped, as if to suppress the anguish the bare idea of it caused him, and then added in a softer tone, "If they should command it, Matilda, tell me, what resolution would you adopt?" On hearing these words she knelt down before the image of Christ, and, having obliged the Prince to do the same, answered, "In the name of this object of my eternal veneration, I renew the oath of never belonging to any but you!"—"Matilda!" interrupted he with warmth, "this is not enough—swear that you will be mine!" "I swear it!" exclaimed she; "Malek, give me thy hand!" Surprised and delighted, Malek Adhel gave it: she took it, and, placing it with her own on the book of the Gospels, she added with a sort of enthusiasm, "Now am I ready to unite myself with thee, Malek Adhel, for life—for eternity; I wait but for one word—wilt thou worship the God I serve?"—Confused, at a loss, the Prince exclaimed, "What dost thou ask, Matilda?"—"My eternal felicity and thine!" replied the virgin, beaming with enthusiastic raptures; "wouldst thou refuse it me?" Perhaps he was going to yield, perhaps religion, twice prevailing in the course of a few instants, was *going* to employ that flame of love she had just

triumphed over, to enlighten an Infidel ; but the noise of some persons walking precipitately frightened the Princess ; and Malek Adhel had scarcely put on his helmet, when Herminia appeared. "Madam," said she, "the gates of the city have just been closed ; the King of Jerusalem, going his round over the ramparts, fancies he has heard the sound of a strange voice proceeding from your apartment ; the soldiers on the watch have assured him that a Mussulman had been introduced into your retirement, and had not left it. He then came to your door, and now insists on being admitted ; nay, demands to know who is the presumptuous man who dares hold converse with you at such an hour, and thus transgress the rule that forbids any Mahomedan remaining in Ptolemais after dark." "Well," exclaimed Malek Adhel, unable to contain himself any longer, "let him appear, let him come, and gratify my impatience to shed his blood !"——Herminia screamed with surprise on recognising the Prince—"What wouldst thou, Malek Adhel !" said Matilda, in unspeakable distress ; "wilt thou ruin me by such a scene ! Ah ! if my fame be dear to thee, take care not to be known ! Follow Herminia ; she will conduct thee hence. Shouldst thou meet Lusignan, tell him thou wert ignorant of the law which forbids Mussulmen to remain in Ptolemais after dark ; tell him, thou beggest pardon in my name ; if he should grow angry and threaten thee, I shall estimate thy love by the silence thou wilt preserve !" The Prince pressed her hand with passionate eagerness. and replied, "Thou requirest that I should prefer thy honour to my own ; I promise to obey. Matilda, and leave thee with that recollection ; it will tell thee some day what I have a right to expect."

As he uttered these words he withdrew ; Herminia followed him ; at the outer door he found the King of Jerusalem at the head of his soldiers, who said to him, "Presumptuous Arab, whence thy audacity to remain in Ptolemais, and with the Princess

of England at such an hour? Knowest thou it is a crime that deserves death?"—The Prince replied with an emotion which all attributed to his apprehension of being punished—"I am a Saracen; I came a few hours ago to Mahomed's tents, and am ignorant of the rule established at Ptolemais. I am charged with letters from Malek Adhel to the Princess Matilda, and came in obedience to my master."—"Were it only on account of that abhorred master of thine," replied Lusignan enraged, "I will punish thee in such a way as to teach him what fate I reserve for him too!"—"I would not advise this," replied Malek Adhel proudly; "for heaven, which has lighted up the fire of courage in his breast, and given him a heart incapable of fear, might speedily bring him here to teach you, even among your friends and soldiers, how he treats those who give him offence by their insolent speeches and proud pretensions!"—"Vile Saracen," interrupted the King of Jerusalem, "thinkest thou I will tamely bear the insults of such a wretch as thou?—Soldiers, load him with chains instantly and throw him into a deep dungeon's gloom, till his master come to claim him. We shall then see how he will receive the answer I prepare for him, and whether the sword I drew for the son of Mary will not obtain satisfaction from this hated Mussulman."—"If fighting me please you as well as him," resumed Malek Adhel, "and if death do not frighten you, I offer you both battle and death! Come on, this very moment!—The darkness of night shall not protect you; spite of it, my sword shall find your heart."—"Dost thou think then," replied Lusignan disdainfully, "that I would degrade regal majesty so low as to fight with such an abject enemy! To-morrow, in the face of the whole camp, and in the sight of Mahomed himself, shall an infamous punishment atone for thy temerity, and revenge me for thy insolence!"—He said, and ordered him to be loaded with chains; Malek Adhel drew his sword with that fire that revealed the hero. Lusignan looked at him, wonder-

ed, and said, "Who art thou, thus to think of defending thyself?" Had Malek Adhel exposed his own life only, he would have answered by attacking Lusignan; but he wished not to commit Matilda, and yet, in suffering himself to be put in chains, he must unavoidably be recognised, and this again would be disobeying her. In such an alternative, he ventured to discover himself to his rival. "Hear!" said he to him, in a low voice; "I am Malek Adhel! If my sword does not tell thee so, it is to avoid a scandal that might offend her, to whose service we both have devoted our lives; and, according to the use thou wilt make of the secret I confide to thy honour, I shall see whether thou art worthy of the name of knight and the esteem of a rival who hates thee!"—"I hate thee a thousand times more!" replied Lusignan, whose voice was altered with rage, "and the respect alone which I bear the illustrious Matilda can force me to silence, quell my anger, and suspend my vengeance!"—"If thou art anxious to gratify it," answered Malek Adhel, "thou shalt not wait. Meet me to-morrow at sunset in the sycamore wood that spreads near the gate of Nazareth, and the life of one of us shall decide." At the answer the King of Jerusalem gave was to squeeze his hand; then, raising his voice, he said to his soldiers, that he was satisfied with that slave's apology; that they might conduct him without the city gates, and take care to preserve silence on the adventure.

Herminia, without being perceived, watched all that had passed, and came back to give her mistress the account as soon as she saw the Prince in safety. Matilda easily guessed what Malek Adhel had whispered to Lusignan; she knew too well that the arrogance of the last would not have forgiven a soldier who had just insulted him, had he not in discovering himself forced Lusignan by that mark of esteem to show himself worthy of having received it. But she was equally certain that the one could not have yielded, nor the other have remained silent, except

with the hope of early revenge. She therefore could entertain no doubt but that they had provoked each other to fight, and though she thought Malek Adhel invincible, Lusignan's valour alarmed her. All night her mind was employed in finding out the means of avoiding the danger that threatened the Prince, and fear and love suggested a project which she hastily put in execution. Scarcely did daylight appear, when she sent to the King's quarters, to request permission to celebrate that same day, by a solemn festival, the fortunate truce which had just taken place between two empires, hoping that he would do her the favour to assist in it, as well as the principal chiefs of the army.

Richard, surprised at the message, was on the point of sending a refusal; he could not bear that his sister should wish to celebrate an event that afflicted him so deeply; yet, as he was happy, that, by making a public display, she would seem openly to abjure her first engagements, he thought that his consent would bind her more closely to the obligations of remaining in the world, and submitting to what he should some day prescribe; he therefore answered, that, not only he agreed to her request, but that he also wished her to bestow a sumptuous pomp and regal magnificence on her banquet, and would take upon himself the care of inviting the ladies and knights who should have the honour of being present there.

All those, whom the King of England was pleased to name, deemed themselves happy in the honour of his preference, and eagerly repaired under the costly and magnificent tents the Princess had caused to be pitched on the shore. The King of Jerusalem appeared among the first, hoping that he should be able to escape about the middle of the day to meet and encounter Malek Adhel in the sycamore wood; and likewise filled with the project of taking revenge on Matilda, in letting her know that he was master of her fate, since he had discovered her secret; but, before he could find time to make her under-

stand it, the conduct of the Princess disconcerted all his projects, and proved to him that the fear of seeing the secret of the preceding day discovered was not what most engaged her attention.

All the most illustrious sovereigns, brave knights, and lovely beauties, that Europe and Asia could bring together, assembled round an immense table, at which the Princess of England presided with admirable grace. At the end of the banquet she arose on a sudden, and, her countenance suffused with a modest blush, said, "With the King, my brother's gracious leave, I require of all the knights here present, that they will grant me a boon." So beautiful and interesting was she while speaking, that there was no need of her royal birth, nor of Richard's commands, to be obeyed. All the knights rose spontaneously, and promised that whatever the Princess Matilda's will might be, they would unconditionally submit to it. She still hesitated to speak before she had obtained Richard's approbation, who, on his part, was afraid to give it, lest he should be engaged in spite of himself. Meanwhile, the laws of chivalry not allowing him to deny his sister any thing on so solemn an occasion, he answered with some confusion, that, far from opposing the boon being granted, he sufficiently knew her reserve and prudence to pledge himself to give her satisfaction as far as might be in his power.—"Since your majesty allows me to express my wish," replied she with dignity, "I demand from you, sire, as well as from all the knights who have just sworn obedience to me, a promise that, during the truce which has just been concluded with Saladin, every offensive weapon be hung up; that none be used during the tilts and tournaments but blunted ones; and, in fine, that none among you, under any pretence, spill blood in our games, by provoking or accepting deadly strife, either with the Christians or even the Mussulmen." At these words, all the knights turned down the point of their swords at Matilda's feet, declaring it treason and felony to break their oath before she

had released them. The King of Jerusalem came forward one of the last, and, kneeling reluctantly, said in a low voice to Matilda, with a reproachful look, "Ah, madam. how painful are your laws, and how hard is it for me to obey them to-day!" Matilda, happy in the success of her stratagem, looked at Lusignan more kindly than usual, and answered him in a low and mysterious voice, at the same time holding out her hand to him, "I know what I owe you, and the right your silence has to my gratitude!" Lusignan, transported with a favour which his anxious cares and ardent solicitations had never yet been able to obtain, did not imagine that he owed it to the happiness Matilda then enjoyed, in having secured the Prince's life during the truce; a happiness that filled her soul so completely, that she could not contain it, whence her looks became softer and her expressions kinder, as if every one had been a Malek Adhel around her. Lusignan ventured to believe he could succeed in interesting her, if he continued to appear great and noble in her eyes:—his conduct in the council, his moderation with the Prince, must have acquired him the virgin's esteem, and these were the only means to reach her heart. He thus confirmed himself in the resolution of employing all his artifice to appear generous, and to feign virtues which he had not. Why did he not employ the same efforts to obtain them! With less trouble he would have reaped more success; for, though intrigue, in mustering all its devices, may sometimes resemble magnanimity, yet the weak foundation of virtue sooner or later gives way, and with it falls the deceitful phantom it has raised.

CHAP. XXXVII.

THE sun was already on its decline, when Malek Adhel, exploring for the third time the skirts of the wood, and not seeing Lusignan, wondered what obstacles could detain him ; for next to the pleasure of being preferred by her we love, there is none sweeter than that of taking revenge on a rival. Meanwhile, a cloud of dust arose ; Lusignan appeared coming on full speed, but he was unarmed ; his arm held no shield ; instead of his sword, he carried a lance, the point of which was blunted ; a hat, ornamented with a plume of feathers, had taken the place of his helmet, and in the room of his breast-plate, a purple mantle, with golden flowers, hung on his shoulders. Struck with surprise, Malek Adhel demanded an explanation. Lusignan gave it but not fully ; he said that Matilda had drawn him aside, and made him promise not to accept any challenge during the whole truce ; but he did not say that she had laid the same injunction on all the knights ; hence, by the colouring he gave his account, it might have been supposed to be out of concern for him that Matilda had required such an engagement.—Malek Adhel looked at him disdainfully, and said, “ Lusignan, I can hate, but not fear thee ! Go ! return to the Princess of England ; employ to seduce her all the artifices thy mind can suggest to thee. I know her too well not to be in perfect security.” He said, and rode off full gallop, but was far from enjoying that peace and confidence he talked of ; his heart was filled with anxiety and confusion : he could not forgive Matilda for having incurred an obligation to Lusignan, by receiving a promise from him ; nor could he comprehend the cause of that strange conduct ; for he did not in the least imagine she wished to preserve him from danger.

Accustomed as he was to meet with no invincible adversary, looking at Lusignan's defeat as a mere sport, and not being able to imagine, that, in such a combat, Matilda could fear for any other than his detested rival, he was on the point of believing, that, if she had not felt herself interested for him, she would not have hindered him from exposing himself; and yet, when he recollected the candour, the innocence of the virgin, and particularly the tender emotion she had shown the day before, he blushed at his suspicions, and longed to go, and implore forgiveness. How, in his impatience, did he count the hours that were to elapse until he could see Matilda! To take away from his existence all the hours that were to intervene previous to that happy day, how willingly would he have resigned all those that were to follow it! Thus, for passionate souls there is but one point in existence: except this all is nothing; and, to snatch it a moment sooner, they consent to sink into that everlasting ruin they perceive beyond it. O supreme wisdom! what would be our fate, if, ceasing to watch over our destinies, thou allowedst us freely to gratify all our vain wishes. Impatient to realize the various seducing dreams of our imagination, instead of hoping long, we would enjoy at once; and, as there are no true and durable enjoyments but those which long hope has purchased, passing thus in a moment from desire to happiness, we should likewise pass from happiness to disgust, and from disgust to death itself: thus, a day would suffice to devour our rapid existence, which even then we might have found too long.

Malek Adhel did not return straight to Cesarea. When he left Saladin, he told him he was going to visit Ascalon and Jaffa; nor did he wish to deceive his brother. Meanwhile, time pressed; the days he had spent, in going to Ptolemais and waiting for Lusignan, allowed him only to see Ascalon; Jaffa, besides, was not so important; he therefore returned to Cesarea. Saladin eagerly told him that Mahomed had come back, that the Christians accept-

ed the truce and seemed inclined towards the proposed alliance, but had left the decision to the council of bishops. "I do not think," added he, "that we ought to take offence at that vain honour they want to pay their priests. The King of England announces he is going to celebrate that truce by splendid games and festivals; they will but serve as a prelude to those that shall crown the most brilliant marriage the world ever beheld. I will go there, brother; I wish to see so many European kings assemble in ancient Asia; I wish to be present at their fêtes. Unaccustomed to their tournaments, I will not fight there; but thou, Malek Adhel, to whom such sports are familiar, thou, who canst conquer alike in every place, wilt thou miss the opportunity of displaying, before so many kings, the valour, address and magnificence, which have raised thee to such exalted rank in the East?"—"I will attend thee most assuredly," replied Malek Adhel."—"Yes, brother, come," continued the Sultan, "let us not part; my heart is thine, and there is no sacrifice that I am not ready to make thee, save what would affect my religion and my country." The Prince pressed the generous Sultan in his arms; but, amidst these embraces, he fancied still he heard Matilda's voice crying out; "Art thou a Christian? my hand is at that price alone.—" And love that tyrannized over him, and the divine flame that began to enlighten him, strove together to take possession of his soul; but friendship and honour, both insulted, and his country threatening him, would not permit it. Distracted by these perplexities, made unhappy by love, religion, his country, and glory; unhappy, in short, by the combination of all those gifts that form human felicity, Malek Adhel, corroded with sorrow, fear, and anguish, felt that the obstacles that opposed his happiness could only be done away by a miracle, and he knew not of what power to ask that miracle.

Followed by a numerous train, the Sultan sat out for Ptolemais; a hundred troopers rode before him;

the breeze sported in their lofty plumes, and gold and azure shone on their brilliant armour; fifty foot guards marched before, with magnificent turbans, and robes of gold and silk tissue; they led camels loaded with the Sultan's tents, and rich presents, destined for the future Queen of Jerusalem. Amidst that band, the austere Saladin was distinguished by his manly simplicity, and Malek Adhel by his noble deportment and elegant magnificence. They rode Arabian horses, who tossed their heads and curvetted proudly, as if sensible of the honour of bearing such great heroes.

The rays of the third sun since their departure began to tinge the gold and purple clouds, when they perceived the spires of Ptolemais, the camp of the Christians, and the standards of the Cross. Saladin halted, and pitched his tents at the foot of a hill, whence a limpid stream flowed in rapid murmurs, shaded by groves of palm-trees and tamarinds. He hastened to acquaint the Christian Princes with his approach, his intention of assisting at their games, and the wish of Malek Adhel to engage with all their knights. On hearing the news, the whole camp was in rumour and motion; all were impatient to contemplate great Saladin's person, and Malek Adhel, still greater, who till that day, the terror of the Christians, was courting their alliance in the sacred bonds of matrimony. Lusignan was deeply vexed; he foresaw all the success Malek Adhel would deprive him of, and the honour to be acquired in the tournaments appeared to him no longer secure when he knew what a rival he would have to contend with. He concealed his grief, however, for he saw that the open-hearted Richard was sensible of the high proof of esteem Saladin was giving the Christians; he came alone, without any attendants scarcely, to reside among his enemies, and gave himself to them without conditions. So great a confidence announced great generosity, and Richard had too much loftiness of soul not to feel and acknowledge *so magnanimous* an action; he therefore forgot all

personal interests to bestow the most sincere praises on the step Saladin and Malek Adhel had taken, and did not hesitate to treat them with equal confidence in return, by repairing instantly to their tents.

On seeing him arrive without guards or attendants, accompanied by his valour alone, the Sultan, charmed with such a high mark of courtesy, answered it in the most princely way; he caused ices and sherbet to be brought in, and, taking hold of his hand, readily and affectionately said to him, "Great King, the last time we met, thou didst teach me how dangerous an enemy thou wert, and now I find the happiness of possessing thee for a friend." "Dost thou not consent to give us that title, illustrious Richard?" exclaimed Malek Adhel, moved, on observing in his proud and manly features the resemblance of the beauty he loved; "and wilt thou refuse to join to it that of ally and brother?" The sight of the Prince revived at once, in the soul of Richard, the recollection of his defeat, and of his ensuing rage, and he answered in a faltering voice, "Invincible warrior, before Richard saw thee, he had never turned his back on an enemy; and must the hand of his sister reward thee for having taught him the shame of it?" "What sayest thou, noble Richard?" replied the Prince eagerly; "what victory could rank with such a defeat? Didst thou not appear in the midst of our army like the lion of the desert, who rushes on a caravan, attacks and disperses it alone, yields to numbers only, and leaves his prey after having marked his passage by the most dreadful havoc?"

Malek Adhel's answer, voice, and countenance, pleased Richard; and he could not escape feeling that ascendancy the Prince obtained over all who were admitted to his presence—an ascendancy which he owed to that noble sincerity which crowned his other virtues, and gave dignity and grace to every thing he said and did. The conference was long; Richard spoke of the engagements which connected him with Lusignan, expressed the anguish he

should experience if the council of bishops forced him to abandon his friend, and betray his faith; he did not deny, that, were it not for that oath wherein his honour was pledged, he should behold the proffered alliance with pleasure, and be happy at his sister becoming the bond of amity between the two worlds. Malek Adhel, during the explanation, had been obliged more than once to silence his feelings, not to interrupt him; yet, when he perceived that, if the council of bishops should not be favourable to his wishes, Matilda might perhaps be forced to give Lusignan her hand, he could not help telling Richard that the Princess was not at liberty to disengage the faith she had sworn to him in the Desert. —“I know,” exclaimed the King, “the promise my imprudent sister has presumed to make you, but I know likewise that the head of our church has the right of releasing her from it, and that it was not wise in you to depend on her.” —“I depend on her till death!” interrupted Malek Adhel warmly; “I depend on her as on my own honour, as on thine! and that is saying much!” Richard wished to reply, but Saladin prevented him. “Why do you both thus give way to anger?” said he; “let us put off the season of storms until the time when we may perhaps be forced to become enemies again; when the council of your priests have decided, it will be time enough to know whether we are to swear endless war or everlasting peace; meanwhile, let us show the world that we know as well how to esteem each other as to fight.” These words extinguished all spirit of discord, and Richard and Malek Adhel, shaking hands most cordially, forgot their resentment. In the mean time the hour drew near when the tournaments were to begin; Richard mentioned it to Saladin, and inquired if he would not honour them with his presence. “And thou, brave Malek Adhel,” added he, “wilt thou not also come to display thy address and valour, and match them with ours? The rewards will be given by my sister, and surely thou wilt be anxious to deserve them?” —“I

“Ay!” exclaimed the Prince, running to his lance, his eyes beaming with ardent love and glory.—“Curb the impetuosity of thy ardour till to-morrow,” resumed the King of England, “for this day thou wilt only be a spectator of our sports; the judges of the camp have decided it so; to-morrow the lists will be opened for thee.”—“To-morrow!” replied Malek Adhel, dejectedly; “ah! perhaps to-day I shall behold Lusignan crowned victor; but it matters not—to-morrow shall revenge many insults!” He then asked Richard if he might see the Princess, and appear in her apartments.—“It is a liberty which no christian knight dare venture to take,” replied Richard, “and which cannot be granted; but she will attend the Queen to the tournaments, and assist at the succeeding fêtes; there thou mayest see and speak to her.” He said and left them. Soon the flourish of drums and trumpets announced to Saladin and his brother that the tilts were going to take place, and both immediately repaired to the christian camp.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHEN the Sultan appeared at the entrance of the camp, Richard came to receive him, followed by the most illustrious among the christian knights : he was conducted to a throne erected in the shape of a tower, which had been prepared on purpose.—It was covered with rich carpets, embroidered with silver ; flags and oriflams of various colours, bearing the arms of the Crescent, were majestically waving above ; and the breeze that fanned them seemed to direct their soft undulations towards the banners of the Cross which hung around them ; and thus, by inter-mixing them together, to set the example of peace and amity to the different powers they represented.

Saladin placed himself on a high seat ; Malek Adhel occupied one a little lower : on the breast of the young hero shone a rich vest, thrice dipped in Tyrian purple, and over his brass helmet a lofty white plume was elegantly displayed. Repeatedly he looked around, but could not perceive Matilda ; the combats were going to begin, and he was not allowed to share in them : these ideas filled him with sorrow, and his countenance betrayed uneasiness and impatience. The Lord of Coucy perceived it—Coucy, who late was Montmorency's best friend, and would have proved his rival in glory at the French court, if Montmorency could have had a rival ; he guessed the cause of Malek Adhel's uneasiness, and essayed to sooth it thus :—"Young hero, it seems strange to thee to remain idle when all combat around thee : forgive us that we settled it so ; it is a homage paid to thy valour, since we were apprehensive, if thou wert suffered every day to lay claim to victory, that no Christian would ever be crowned victor." Malek Adhel's mind was not sufficiently at liberty to enable him to answer this civil-

ty; but, taken up with one only thought, he said to Coucy, "Brave Frenchman, since I am not permitted to-day to lay claim to the prize the Princess Matilda's fair hand is to bestow on the victor, do not permit that Lusignan shall obtain it."—"And why dost thou do him the honour to be more jealous of him than of me?" exclaimed Coucy, rather offended.—"If the Princess had to make a choice between the two, I should fear thee most," replied Malek Adhel; "but Lusignan's pretensions, supported by Richard's approbation, have obtained public notoriety; and, I confess, I wish they may meet with public mortification." Coucy squeezed his hand, assuring him he should be satisfied; and, the drums and trumpets beginning to play, he added, "The field opens, and the Queen of England appears on the balcony opposite, attended by Princess Matilda!" Malek Adhel started, for he then perceived Bérengère, followed by her sister, whom Lusignan was handing.—In the Desert he might have seen her as beautiful and more interesting, but never had she appeared before him with so much lustre and magnificence: her silver gauze robe was elegantly fastened up with ruby and other rich stone clasps, and on her head a delicate gold and purple tissue confined her beautiful flaxen hair. Transported, struck with her charms, Malek Adhel saw no more of the surrounding spectators, the camp, or the whole world; he arose in a sort of ecstasy, and exclaimed, pressing eagerly the hand of his brother, and his eyes fixed on the object of his admiration, "Behold her, Saladin!"

The beauty of the Princess astonished the Sultan; he gave symptoms of surprise, and told his brother that he thanked heaven that friendship had been beforehand with justice. "How could I not have forgiven thee," said he, "on beholding her that excused thy weakness?—But, in order to forgive thee, thou knowest I had no occasion to see her." At that moment, Bérengère, having recognised the Prince, bowed to him with a lively expression of joy and

gratitude: Matilda raised her eyes on him, and cast them down again with such a blush, and with so much grace, that her beauty seemed more heightened.—Malek Adhel saw this, and could not help telling his brother, “Saladin, I consent to die for thee, but I swear not to live without her!”

On a sudden a flourish was heard, the lists were opened, the combatants entered and intermixed, and the games began: there force, skill and valour, were alternately displayed: Lusignan, fired with matchless ardour, disputed the prize in Castilian tilts, and gained much success. Mounted on a spirited courser, he raised the lance, and gave the last challenge. All the swords were instantly drawn, crossed each other, struck sparks of fire—and men and horses, were thrown down and mingled in the dust. Lusignan and Coucy alone had withstood the shock. Angry to see their victory so long disputed, they ran their course, and rushed against one another full speed, their eyes darting arrogance and fire; their lances broke in pieces, and they drew their swords; all the spectators were moved, and Malek Adhel could not forbear applauding. Meanwhile, the judges of the field approached, and reminded them of the condition; the two fierce rivals reluctantly gave up the hope of shedding blood; but, instead of swords, they resumed the stumps of their lances; they drew closer together, and pranced round each other, seeking to grapple. Malek Adhel watched them close, nor lost one of their movements; in thought he encouraged Coucy, pointed out the means of victory, grieved when he failed, and found in Lusignan a rival worthy to encounter himself. Meanwhile, the Lord of Coucy seemed to have the advantage; he had just overthrown his enemy, and had precipitated himself on the ground with him; when at the instant he was going to crush him, Lusignan, springing up skilfully, made the French hero stumble and fall. Malek Adhel screamed with vexation, while Lusignan eyed him triumphantly, and, following up his victory, forced Coucy, who lay on the

ground, to acknowledge his defeat. The camp resounded with acclamations; every one exclaimed, "Honour and victory to Lusignan, to the King of Jerusalem!" Saladin and his brother, on hearing this title, glanced a sarcastic look. The victor passed proudly under Matilda's balcony, bowed to her, and prepared to receive the prize from her hand. He ascended the steps, knelt down before her, and kissed her hand. She was forced to endure this, and to hang round his neck a rich gold chain, the brilliant reward of his victory. On seeing this, Malek Adhel could not contain his grief; it betrayed itself in his countenance and gestures, and misled him to such a degree, as to make him fancy Matilda guilty. He accused and condemned her; he wished that in the sight of the whole camp she had refused to crown Lusignan. He was dying with impatience to vent his complaints, but how could he speak before so many witnesses? Was he not aware that his speeches, his actions, his very looks, were carefully watched? He would not have regarded it much, if he had thought of himself alone; but, spite of his anger, he thought of her also; and, even at the moment when he silently reproached her with her fault, he would have given a thousand lives, if he had had them, to spare her a moment's sorrow. Meanwhile, the time drew near when he was to be allowed to approach her. In a magnificent pavilion, which Richard had caused to be erected on the coast, the dances were to succeed the games, and Saladin was invited there with Malek Adhel: but the austere Sultan refused to go; wanton pleasures had no charms for him, he therefore withdrew to his tent, to muse on the great interests of his empire, and left Malek Adhel to repair alone to the pavilion, where the christian princes expected him. Richard advanced to meet him, and presented him to Bérengère; he bowed respectfully to her, and took the hand she offered him. Fearful of displeasing her husband, she endeavoured to subdue that emotion which the sight of her deliverer caused; but in

vain; her tears, in spite of her, revealed the vivacity of that gratitude she durst not express.—In a faltering voice, she said, “Ah! Prince, would I could bestow on you again part of those favours I have experienced from you!”—“You well know, madam,” replied he, “the favour I come to seek here.” She then hastened to add, in a softer voice, and inclining forward as if to raise him up, “Noble Malek Adhel, were I but the mistress, you would not have to wait long.” He thanked her by a look of gratitude, and turned to pay his respects to Matilda, who stood, half concealed, behind the Queen’s chair. Lusignan, who was near her, with a proud and disdainful look seemed to scorn the Prince’s homage, while the last, indignant to meet every where this hateful rival by the side of Matilda, unable to confine his anguish, nor daring to reveal it, cast on Matilda so sorrowful and yet stern a glance, that, in the emotion she experienced, she dropped the hand she was holding out to him, and a tear started in her eye. Malek Adhel saw it; seized with repentance, he accused himself already, saying in his own mind, “That the fault of afflicting Matilda was worse than all the wrongs he had attributed to her;” but his reflections were soon broken in upon by the sound of musical instruments announcing the dances were going to begin. Lusignan as conqueror in the field, was alone to do the honours of the fête; to him belonged the right of opening the joyous ceremony; and, making the first choice among the ladies, he took Matilda’s hand, and conducted her into the middle of the hall. All eyes were fixed on them. Lusignan had cast off his heavy armour; a short rich mantle covered his shoulders, and joy animated his countenance. He particularly excelled in grave dances, and had never appeared to so much advantage as at that moment, when he enjoyed the glory of his triumph, the pleasure of being near her he loved, and of humbling his rival. His satisfaction, however, was not unalloyed, for he could not be insensible to the reluctance with which the Princess

of England yielded to court etiquette, and to her brother's commands. Forced to accept the hand of Lusignan, and appear alone with him before an immense crowd of applauding spectators, the profound melancholy imprinted on her looks, and the want of life in her movements, declared sufficiently that the place she occupied was not that which her heart would have chosen, had she been at liberty to follow its impulse alone. Meanwhile, the aversion she felt could not alter her features, nor diminish her graces; a grave dance suited the dignity of her deportment; the dejection of her spirits reflected on her person an additional charm, and diffused over her that divine and moral grace which springs from the mind, and adorns outward beauty with that of the soul.

A triple row of spectators, seated on steps covered with costly carpets, the dazzling reflection of the lights placed in chrystal chandeliers, the mixed sound of warlike and musical instruments, the beauty of the ladies, the valour of the knights, and the lustre of so many sceptres, cast on that assembly a pomp and magnificence hitherto unparalleled. But how little did all this brilliant display engage the attention of Malek Adhel! Amidst all this regal splendour he saw only Matilda, and sighed only to speak to her; if he was proud to see her look so beautiful, and extolled above all other beauties, he grew indignant too, that they should join the name of Lusignan with the admiration she inspired, and that the arrogant sovereign should derive from his triumph the favour of placing himself by her side at the sumptuous banquet which succeeded the other entertainments.

Meanwhile, when the lighter dances had taken the place of the grave ones, Matilda came and seated herself by the Queen; the assembly, whose eyes had been charmed with her, ventured to express a desire to see her dance again, and that Malek Adhel should succeed Lusignan in the honour of leading her. The Prince, delighted, ran to her, and took

her hand; the virgin arose, and her pale and melancholy countenance was suddenly enlivened with colour and joy. Lusignan, indignant, rushed forward and parted them; but not so quickly, however, but that Matilda had found time to slip a note and a key into the Prince's hand. Malek Adhel, alike confounded at Lusignan's audacity and the gift he had received, remained for a time motionless. Lusignan insisted that his triumph had given him the right for that day of being the Princess's only knight, and that no one should share it with him; "And were I disposed to resign it," added he, looking at Malek Adhel arrogantly, "thinkst thou I would do it in thy favour?" The Prince felt his anger rise, and in the same threatening voice replied, "Thou art in the right to make use of thy prerogative to-day, for I swear it is the last time I will suffer thee to enjoy it; to-morrow I shall be allowed to fight—to-morrow thy kings shall not command me to remain idle! We shall see to-morrow, during the time of the games, which of us shall possess the right of placing himself near the illustrious Matilda!" He said and withdrew; for such inexpressible joy had overpowered his heart, that no room remained for anger; the mysterious paper too, with the key which he held, promised him a happiness his thoughts could scarcely conceive, and which his anxiety to ascertain forced him to retire abruptly. Was he to believe all his fancy suggested? Was he to obtain all he expected?—What meant that paper!—and that key, the source of the most intoxicating hopes—whither was it destined to guide him?

Scarcely was he out of sight of the camp, when he eagerly fixed his eyes on the note he had received; it was the first time he saw characters traced by that beloved hand, and what lover ever beheld without emotion the writing of her he loved? He could not contain his impatience; with a trembling hand he broke the seal, and read the following lines:

"To-morrow at sun-rise this key will admit you into the monument where great Montmorency's ashes are deposited; there you will meet Matilda."

Malek Adhel doubted whether he was awake—an appointment! He was too happy to feel any surprise; but, had he been less so, perhaps he would have wondered at Matilda's step. For, in fact, what motive could have inspired that young and timid virgin with the boldness of proposing an assignation? Surely that pure and religious heart could not have conceived so rash a thought, except with the view of performing some good action, or fulfilling some important duty? She now knew the world sufficiently, to be aware that such conduct would commit her strangely. While the modest Matilda was very apprehensive of men's censure, she also dreaded still more to do wrong in the eyes of the Almighty, and to deserve the reproach of having preferred human interests to divine laws; it was therefore rather to obey them than indulge her love, that she had resolved on seeing Malek Adhel secretly. She had great sacrifices to require of him; such as could not be delayed a day, and on which perhaps the Prince's safety depended. Before such important considerations, she had silenced common fears, and it was after having listened to her conscience alone, independently of her heart, that she allowed her heart to rest satisfied with the suggestions of her conscience.

Still, notwithstanding the purity, I had almost said the sanctity, of her intentions, when day-light appeared, and the moment of meeting Malek Adhel drew near, her delicacy was alarmed; she hesitated, doubted, and duty, rather than love, gave her the fortitude to go.

She left Ptolemais at the hour when the sun begins to dry up the dew, and mounted her car, surrounded by her women and guards; it was only with a numerous train that Richard allowed her to take an airing round the city; and he had even strictly forbidden the approach of any Christian or Mussul-

men knights, without excepting even Lusignan himself.

She directed her ride towards Montmorency's tomb ; the car stopped, and the guards ranged themselves around to prevent any intruders ; her women followed her to the foot of the monument. How her heart palpitated at the thought that Malek Adhel was there, and that the funeral edifice, which covered the ashes of the hero who was no more, concealed also the hero she loved ! She drew near the door, was going to push it open, but a general tremour seized and arrested her. " O my God," said she, falling on her knees, " if it be to see and hear Malek Adhel rather than to make him see and hear thee that I come ; if, in short, among the motives that guide me, thy penetrating eye can discover a weakness, and if I am destined to leave this place with a cause for repentance—do not permit me to pass this threshold ! Deprive me of life—I will quit it without a murmur, for I fear death less than the idea of offending thee." This fervent prayer restored to Matilda all her force and virtue ; supported by the arm of God, she feared nothing more ; and, feeling herself superior to the weaknesses of her heart, she turned round to her women, and said, " Leave me here alone awhile : do not disturb my meditations ; I am going to pray for the prosperity of the faith and the conversion of the Infidels !" The women did not wonder at this injunction ; they were accustomed to see her remain for a long time in Montmorency's monument, of which she and the Archbishop of Tyre alone had the key. The Prelate on his departure entrusted his to her care, and was far from suspecting it was destined to pass into the hands of Malek Adhel. But Matilda had thought proper to do it, and as she opened the door, she thought the Prelate himself would not have blamed this step. She entered tremblingly, advanced under the gloomy shades of that monument where lay the greatest of French knights ; all the interior was hung with black, and a magnificent silver lamp was burn-

ing there night and day. By its glimmering light she perceived Malek Adhel ; he knew her, he ran ; —love, joy, emotion, hindered him from speaking consistently ; but his rapture was on the point of breaking out into loud exclamations.—She hastened by an expressive sign to make him understand he ought to remain in silence ; he obeyed, while his heart expressed its transports of felicity by looks and tears.—The chaste virgin drew back, cast her eyes on the ground, and in a firm and collected voice spoke as follows.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"MALEK ADHEL, you may well believe that I did not come hither to listen to your love, nor to abandon ourselves to the happy effusions of tenderness; this were to profane the grave, and insult the dead. The words we pronounce in such a place as this ought, like it, to be holy, severe, and solemn." As she uttered these words, Matilda had infused so much austerity into her countenance and deportment, that Malek Adhel was awed. What the image of death had not been able to produce, was done in a moment by Matilda's expression; and the instant she had done speaking, all the voluptuous ideas he had hitherto indulged in that abode of death vanished, and made room to respectful awe. "Matilda," said he, "away from you as in your presence, love is still my only thought; the saddest objects cannot detach my mind from it; it is the first of all my contemplations and blessings."—"The first of earthly blessings," interrupted she; "but the first of earthly blessings is little to the soul of a Christian.—Hear me, Malek Adhel. The most urgent interest I can have, that of your salvation, has alone induced me to take a step which, not to be deemed the most rash, ought to be the most pure and sanctified.—To-morrow the bishops are to meet, and yet the venerable William has not appeared: they are going to pronounce on our destinies, and still your soul remains in darkness and error.—Will the council of the venerable fathers of our church dare to give me to an Infidel? And if they should, if policy should urge them to it, will my own sense of religion allow me to accede?"—"What do you say, Matilda!" exclaimed the Prince with a mixture of surprise and anger; "have I understood you rightly? If your bishops consent, I have not overcome all obstacles yet, since I may ex-

perience the unexpected and poignant grief of finding one in your heart?"—"Alas!" replied she, "I am much afraid you will find none there: I am weak, love is powerful, and you rank very near God in my soul; but hear, Malek Adhel! learn what motive has brought me hither. You know not why the Archbishop of Tyre is not at Ptolemais, you know not the unparalleled obligations you have to the worthy Prelate: if he has left the court and its splendour, laid down his mitre and the purple, it is for your sake he has done it. Led by his charity, supported by his virtue and his God, he has taken the road to Cesarea, alone, to see you, to speak to you, and to employ all the warmth of his eloquence to impart the word of truth to you."—"When I left Cesarea, the Archbishop had not appeared there," replied the Prince.—"And yet," added Matilda, "he sat out several days before that day—shall I say happy or terrible day, when you surprised me at Ptolemais."—"O my beloved!" interrupted he, "there are no terrible days but those when I do not see you!"—"And yet these are the days I am going to inflict on us!" replied she with force and dignity. "Malek Adhel, honour, gratitude, and our own interest, prescribe equally to us to abandon combats, victory, love, and its pleasures; to go and seek information respecting the fate of that unfortunate old man, who is perhaps now groaning in captivity, or expiring in torments, for having preferred your salvation to his own life!"—"Heavens! Matilda," exclaimed he, "what do you require? do you wish that I should quit you?"—"This very instant; for when danger is pressing, duty is imperious, and not a moment is to be lost."—"You wish me to leave you, to leave you on the very day when I am to humble Lusignan, and triumph before you!"—"Wretched human vanity," replied the Princess, "which, ever thirsty after glory and success, swells the soul with perishable hopes, and prevents its feeding on everlasting ones. O Malek Adhel, what is a triumph over Lusignan! Have you not before obtained triumphs a hundred

times more splendid, and what advantage have you reaped from them?—But a triumph over your own inclinations, the triumph of duty over the most unruly desires, a triumph of virtue over glory itself, these are still perhaps unknown to you, and such as these last during our whole lives, and follow us into the next. Malek Adhel, what is it to thee to humble Lusignan? Is his defeat to be compared with what you would sacrifice, and will you not be greater by rising superior to yourself, than by rising above him? Believe me, abandon combats that offer thee certain victory; consent even, if requisite, that Lusignan may receive a new crown of victory from my hand, and, secure of my heart and eternal love, hasten to deserve them still more by flying whither humanity and gratitude call you!” “But Matilda,” replied the Prince, “why am I to go? why do you command it? Can I not send in search of the Prelate trusty and faithful servants, who would supply my place?” —“Supply thy place, when thou art to show thyself great and generous!” interrupted she eagerly; “do not let me believe that possible; do not let me think, that when the unfortunate are to be assisted, another could display as much zeal, and find as much satisfaction in it, as thou couldst!—Malek Adhel, if, by a miracle of God’s providence, although a Mussulman, thou didst not surpass other men in virtue, where would be the excuse of my love? Thou alone canst, with thy indefatigable goodness, follow and find out the worthy Archbishop’s retreat; and if it should turn out, as I apprehend, that the Infidels have loaded him with chains, thou alone in Saladin’s empire art powerful enough to break them, and open the dungeon where he is confined. What new claims will not such conduct give thee to his gratitude, to the esteem of the Christians, and to my tenderness! And, when the world shall learn that thou hast scorned vain triumphs for the sake of saving an old man, thinkest thou thy glory will lose by it? and when thou wilt appear before the council of bishops as the saviour of William, thinkest thou they will be

less disposed in thy favour than if thou camest as Lusignan's conqueror? Ah! were all these human rewards to fail thee, will thy conscience, thy God, and Matilda's love, fail thee!"—"I go," interrupted the Prince, kneeling down before her: "O daughter of heaven! thou openest a new world to my view, where I perceive something better than pleasure, and where virtue offers joys superior to those of love itself. Matilda, if you are not single of your kind, if there are in Europe other women who resemble you, I do not wonder at the homage paid to them, and the empire they exercise. How can that beauty be otherwise than a divine creature, who can only be pleased by dint of glory and virtue! O happy christian knights! boast of your valour no longer, when the same object that fires you with love fires you likewise with honour. Yes, Matilda, I obey, I go! for thou hast infused so new a sentiment into my soul, that methinks I go without reluctance."—"O heaven!" exclaimed the Princess with transport, "what a soul is Malek Adhel's—to be so great though thou hast not yet enlightened it! All that is most excellent it seems to have imbibed; no human abode on earth can be more worthy of thee! When, then, O my God, when wilt thou descend to inhabit there? and thou, noble Montmorency," added she, kneeling down by the coffin, "thou whose ashes ought to live on being near a hero so like thee, renew thy prayers, implore all heaven's powers, let them join with thee in asking Malek Adhel's conversion! Speak for him, thou happy spirit, as thou didst speak on thy death-bed, and let thy tears, blood, and prayers, become the bond that shall unite and reconcile Malek Adhel to God."

At these words, the Prince also knelt down, and said, "Illustrious hero, thou whose life I admired, and whose ashes I revere; thou, whose death has made my tears flow, and whose friendship would have been so valuable to me; thou, in fine, whom alone I could forgive aspiring to the hand of Matilda, because thou alone seemedst worthy of her;

more surely remains of thee than this senseless dust; O! deign from the unknown abode thou art in, deign to speak to my heart, and instruct it how to reconcile honour, friendship, and love." After a long pause, Matilda rose, and replied calmly, "The Archbishop of Tyre will instruct you. Lose no time; depart this very instant, without returning to the camp, without seeing Saladin: he might detain you, and a day's delay might ruin all.—The council of bishops is to assemble to-morrow, perhaps it will sit but a week; before the expiration of that term you will have found out the Prelate, and brought him back; he will by then have worked your conversion—begun it at least; because he will then be able to address the council in your favour and mine, to demand our union, and, you know it well, nothing can withstand the Prelate's eloquence."—"O my beloved," replied he sorrowfully, "thou rendest my heart! I cannot resign thee, and I cannot betray a generous brother! What, to reconcile so many contradictory duties, hadst thou not better accept of a Mussulman for thy husband? I should not be such in my heart, Matilda, but, in private, worship the same God as thou."—"Alas," replied the virgin, "the Almighty will not be worshipped privately, and I much fear he would hold himself offended at receiving a homage you durst not address to him publicly.—But I confess, were the Archbishop of Tyre to think otherwise, I should feel no reluctance in adopting his opinion. Go then, Malek Adhel, go; seek William; he loves thee as the child of his loins, would give his blood for thy salvation; and that secret affection, with which thy virtues have inspired his great soul, will surely incline him to use an indulgence the other bishops might not feel: he will support us; if thou art a Christian at heart, perhaps he will be satisfied, and expect from time and my exertions a more complete conversion; perhaps he will command me to do things I could not venture to do without him."—"O Matilda!" interrupted the Prince with impetuosity,

"tell me what magic prevails in thy discourse? Yes, in spite of the reserve of thy modesty, I think I have understood thy heart, and now my blood boils, my thought flies over time and space! Methinks I am impatient to quit thee!"—"Farewell!" said she; then, raising her hands towards him, "Go, find the friend of God, and bring me back permission to be happy."—"O my beloved!" replied he, pressing her to his breast, "my future bride, farewell!"—He ceased, unable to add another word. The chaste virgin turned aside, fell back; she held out her hand to him, and leaning her head against one of the marble images weeping round the coffin, she bathed it with real tears—the tears of love and happiness.—The Prince's tears were burning and passionate; he held her hand to his lips; they wept in silence, and love never reigned with more absolute sway than over these two weeping hearts. What language in such silence! what life in this tomb! They begged, they hoped, for long and happy days, while they were treading on those ashes which asked and hoped for nothing; and amidst the shades of death, the oath of everlasting love escaped from their lips. Ah! surely, when that oath was uttered, the joys of the elect descended for a time into their souls—for what are the joys of heaven but everlasting love? Such, O human heart, art thou, as God made thee, with all thy oppositions and contrasts, giving as many tears to excess of happiness as to excess of grief; so feeble, that, when pleasure overpowers thee, on hearing thy sighs, one would think thou art rent with anguish; and so great, that no one thing on earth can content and fill thee, and, unless heaven itself, with all its unlimited joys and incomprehensible immensity, descend into thee, a void space for ever remains within.

Matilda was preparing to leave the monument and return to Ptolemais with her train, in order to restore the sacred place to that solitude requisite for the Prince to leave it unperceived in his turn, when a sudden noise was heard at the door.—"Who is

there?" inquired the Princess alarmed. "I," replied a voice she immediately recognised to be that of Bérengère; "I came hither with the King to meet you; we will not suffer that you should remain so long shut up in a tomb."—"O holy Saviour, we are lost!" said she in a low voice, "Richard is there!—if he should enter, and see you—all your blood—O Malek Adhel, we will die together!"—"Calm thy alarm, my beloved," answered he; "I shall contrive to avoid the King's sight."—He said, and placed himself under the pall that was spread over Montmorency's coffin: Matilda, while she arranged it round his head, experienced fresh terror, but it was no longer the fear of being surprised that caused it; when she saw Malek Adhel under that funeral covering, as if entombed under the shade of death, it seemed to her that he was already cut off from the living, and that, between her and him, death stood exclaiming, that the awful day was not far off when she should be called upon to lay the funeral veil over him for ever! Struck with that fatal presentiment, she turned pale, staggered, and with a trembling hand could scarcely open the door, where Bérengère was waiting for her. Surprised at the extreme alteration of her features, the Queen inquired what gloomy meditation could have affected her thus; but too much terror oppressed the virgin's soul to allow her yet the power of giving an answer: she looked at Bérengère, tried to smile; her lips resisted her efforts, and she was forced to sit down to calm her disordered spirits. Richard looked at her attentively. "Never," said he, "did any person take so much pleasure in haunting tombs, and quit them with so much terror and reluctance; say, what can be the charm that detains you here, and the thoughts that engage your mind?" He then entered the monument; Matilda shuddered—she saw an abyss gaping before her, and destruction stalking by her side. Should Malek Adhel utter but a single word, heave but a sigh, and the inflexible Richard *hear it*, nothing could stop the impetuosity of his

Wrath ; he would plunge his sword into the Prince's heart, and the kingdom of darkness open to receive its prey ! Ah ! rather than let his ruin be complete, she was decided to encounter all, spring before the hero she loved, and serve him as a shield : Richard, to reach that generous heart must pierce through that of a sister, and perhaps he would stop and shrink at the idea of shedding some of his own blood ? Thus determined, she arose and listened, ready to dart forwards at the least noise ; but she heard nothing ; all was still, and Richard soon came out with an air of tranquillity that told he had not discovered any thing : he closed the door, took the key, and said to his sister, " You shall not enter this place again, Matilda ; the impressions you receive here are too strong to bear being renewed, and so much melancholy does not become the fate that awaits you. Bid farewell to this monument then, for I swear you shall no longer behold the sad objects it contains." Richard, as he pronounced these words, was unconscious of the misery they gave his sister, and of the sinister presentiment they confirmed ; though guiltless, she had just felt the terrors of crime ; though she had lost nothing, she now experienced those of despair. The unfortunate concealed her grief in silence, and only raising to heaven her eyes suffused with tears, she implored him who alone could hear her, to excuse her, and lend her assistance for what she hoped, or consolations for what she feared.

CHAPTER XL.

IN the course of that day, the tilts recommenced, and the field of honour was opened to the Mussulmen. Saladin came and took his accustomed seat; but Malek Adhel was not with him. Every one wondered, and knew not what to conclude from his absence. How happened it that where a triumph was to be obtained, a rival to be humbled, and the prize to be received from the hands of the Princess of England, Malek Adhel delayed so long to appear? Out of consideration for that great Prince, and at Saladin's request, the opening of the tournaments was suspended for a few hours. During this expectation all eyes were rivetted on Matilda, in order to trace in her countenance the signs of her secret sentiments; but she had recovered her security; the terror of her presentiments had subsided, and, satisfied with Malek Adhel's generosity and attachment, she was more likely to rejoice than grieve at his absence. Lusignan drew near her, and said ironically, "Malek Adhel is very tardy, madam, in coming to make good his threats, and justify that confidence that would not allow him yesterday to entertain any doubt of his gaining the prize. If it were great presumption in him to seem so secure, it was at least his duty to come and contend for it."—"Sire," replied the Princess, with a cold and dignified air, "Malek Adhel is too well known to permit any one to think amiss of him; and the reward due to so noble a character is, to be persuaded, that, when he does not fulfil a common-place duty, it is because he has one of higher importance to attend to."

She said, and left him. Lusignan remained confounded; he drew near Richard, and inquired whether he was certain that his sister had received

no message nor visit from Malek Adhel ; the King affirmed she had not. Still Lusignan doubted, for jealous love is sharp-sighted, and he recollected the day when the Prince was introduced into Matilda's apartment unknown to Richard. But he was diverted from his unhappy reflections by the sound of the trumpets, which announced that the time allowed for Malek Adhel's arrival had just expired, and that the camp judges had opened the lists. Glory called, the warriors flew, and, during that day of harmony, the Mussulmen, intermixing with the Christians, the combat became more general and obstinate than on the preceding day. The Saracens obtained the advantage in some instances ; Kaled threw down the most valorous knights, but Lusignan threw him down in his turn, and at last prevailed over all the rest ; for the second time he was crowned victor by the Princess, and the same on the following days. In the mean time men's minds were in a state of agitation : Saladin began to grow uneasy at his brother's protracted absence, for which he could assign no cause. To abandon all the victories to his rival, leave the stage where his destinies were deciding, and the object his heart adored, seemed so strange to the Sultan, that his friendship was alarmed at the only explanation he could give it ; he knew Malek Adhel, and the impetuosity of his courage and violence of his passions ; he knew the world had no obstacles capable of arresting him ; was Malek Adhel lost to the world and to him ? While that dreadful idea distracted his fraternal feelings, and that emissaries were dispersed on all sides by his command, time elapsed, and the day approached when the council of bishops was to pronounce the resolution that carried with it the destinies of the world. The most profound secrecy enveloped their discussions, for these venerable Fathers had allowed no one to discover on which side they would incline the sacred balance. In vain had Lusignan endeavoured to penetrate the secret, and employed all his artifices to acquire partisans among them : in vain had he re-

minded them it was to him they owed the august mission the Christians had entrusted to them; he could not succeed in biassing their minds, nor alter the rectitude of their judgments: the more sensible they were of the importance of their office and the confidence shown them, the more they wished to evince themselves worthy of the trust. It was not the political interests only of the two empires, it was the cause of heaven they had before them; they were the arbiters of the faith; they laboured for God, and this idea, that raised their minds so high, had freed them from the influence of every human weakness. Lusignan wondered, and found himself disappointed in his hopes. In appointing this council, he had weighed well all the power that flattery and dissimulation have over men's minds, and he had not mistaken: but these men were Christians; and that Christians, animated with the true spirit of their divine law are more than men, he had too much forgotten.

Meanwhile, he was not discouraged; he knew that the Archbishop of Nazareth and the Bishop of Bethlehem abhorred the Infidels; that, next to the Archbishop of Tyre, they were the most eloquent Fathers of the Church, and he thought he might depend on them. He wished much that Richard would exert his credit over the Bishops of his kingdom, to make them averse to all spirit of conciliation; but he durst not propose to him their seduction; he revered Richard's character too much to mention such means, and would have been afraid of weakening his friendship by letting him see he employed them; but at least he indirectly took advantage of the King's blunt sincerity, by contriving to make him declare publicly, on several occasions, that the council would oblige him by refusing the terms; and even succeeded in obtaining from his friendship to urge the conclusion of the meetings; for he feared that if the Archbishop came back, he would turn all their opinions in favour of Malek Adhel; and a confused presentiment told him that William

was on the point of arriving. At last came that day when the decision was to be pronounced, the truce to change into peace or war, and Matilda to know her fate. Twelve hours yet, and Matilda would have no more hopes to entertain, no change to expect; twelve hours yet, and her fate would be decided! Was that awful day to pass, like the preceding ones, in gloomy silence, and no voice to reveal to her what fate had befallen Malek Adhel and the Archbishop? Her soul was agitated, and her countenance betrayed the secret of her soul.—If she durst, she would have repented sending the Prince in quest of the Prelate; but her intention was too pure to allow her to condemn it, were it even at the price of her misfortune. She was endeavouring to be resigned, and to subdue her grief as she had conquered the allurements of love; but this victory was more difficult, and could not be obtained in a moment. During her prayers, therefore, often did love make her absent, and, without thinking, she exclaimed, “O my greatest blessing! who will break my fetters, and give me wings to go and meet thee? How long wilt thou delay bringing me back my joy, and linger in dispelling the gloom that surrounds me? Haste, for I bear grievously the weight of thy absence, and love thee so, that my heart is lost in thee, and can wish for no other comfort.” But scarcely had she uttered these passionate exclamations, than she coloured, and retracted them.

Meanwhile, in proportion as her hopes grew weaker, she felt her love increasing, and it never was perhaps more violent than on that day when she was perhaps on the point of receiving orders to abjure it. How many various griefs crowded on her soul! The prize reserved for the last combat—that prize, the most valuable of all, was the picture of Matilda. Must she be reduced to the mortification of giving it to Lusignan? Alas! when she consented to its being done she thought it would have had another owner. Bérengère caught her in the tumult of

these different agitations : under pretence of conducting her to the tournaments, she came to compassionate and share her sorrow. Matilda sat down by the Queen, wept, and remained in silence ; her hair and dress were disordered. Although the hour of the entertainments was approaching, she could not resolve to insult her own grief by adorning her person with splendour and magnificence. She refused her attendants' cares, and dropped bitter tears on the bandeau of diamonds destined to bind her hair. In vain did the impatient Richard send to request her to haste ; she listened with indifference to the messengers of his displeasure, and feared only the approach of evening. It seemed as if she could put it off by delaying the commencement of the sports, and as they must wait for her to begin, she was resolved to appear as late as possible. In the mean time, the fatal moment when all excuses were exhausted arrived ; she was forced to go.—She did not yet feel that boldness which resists openly ; passion alone gives it, and the timid virgin had more tenderness than passion. They led her like a victim towards the place of pomp and decoration, where all eyes and hearts were waiting for her. Alas ! had she been of a rank less exalted, she might in obscurity have concealed her agitations and tears ; but her sorrow was doomed to appear publicly, before all those who surrounded and watched her. How did that silent grief confined in her bosom increase at the sound of the warlike and joyful instruments of victory ! how bitterly and reluctantly did she perceive satisfaction, pleasure, and hope, still sweeter than pleasure, depicted on the countenances of all around her ! She leaned her elbow on the balcony, reclined her head on her hand : and not deigning to cast a glance on the combatants, kept her eyes intensely fixed on the road to Cesarea, the only place on earth whence a spark of hope could come.

Until that day, Saladin had not entered the lists : accustomed to the deadly blows of battles, he was new to the gallant and warlike exercises of Euro-

pean chivalry, and had not wished to commit his rank in encounters where defeat was a shame, and victory a mere sport. Meanwhile, on seeing his bravest captains invariably conquered by Lusignan, that presumptuous King, who dared to assume the title of King of Jerusalem in his presence, gaining all the prizes, and on the point of obtaining the picture of the Princess destined to Malek Adhel's bed, he could no longer repress his indignation and rage: he rose on his throne, and exclaimed, "Wait for me, King of Jerusalem; thou art not conqueror yet, and perhaps I am destined to strip thee of thy claims to this day's prize, as I have stripped thee of that kingdom thou retainest in title alone." Lusignan, intoxicated with his success, looked at Saladin with arrogance and pride, and said, "Come, proud Soldan; I rejoice in thy challenge; come quickly, and let the noise of thy fall precede that of thy throne, and the end of thy usurpation." Saladin, incensed at so much arrogance, rushed into the circle.—They engaged; never had so much rage and animosity fired two adversaries; the blunted points of their swords but ill served their resentment, and their fury seemed compensated by the violence of their blows. All the spectators were moved; they beheld in silence the dreadful encounter; Matilda herself gave it all her attention; she did not allow herself to form wishes in behalf of Saladin, God's inveterate enemy, who lately had inspired her with so much horror; but yet she made none for Lusignan. No, all the efforts of her resignation and faith were insufficient to induce her to wish he should become the possessor of her picture. Long was that combat equal, and victory uncertain; but Lusignan, accustomed to all these hardy sports, knew the art of saving his strength and activity. Saladin knew only to give deadly blows, and, as, in that kind of struggle, none could prove such, he exhausted his force in vain, and saw with astonishment he was losing his vigour before he had obtained the least advantage. Lusignan availed himself of his enemy's imprudence; he turn-

ness he had crushed his rival, he instantly ran to the Princess's feet. She saw him, blushed, and looked at him again ; she conveyed in that look her heart, her anxiety, her hopes, and her love ; and though she had not uttered a word, Malek Adhel had never been so secure of being beloved. With what pleasure were the virgin's arms thrown around the hero's neck, to suspend the chain to which hung the picture ! how happy and proud to decorate him with that gift in the eyes of so many confederate nations ! how much more she thought he had deserved ; and how did the tender hope, of being able, some day, to give him what he had a just right to, add charms to her beauty ! Prostrate before her, Malek Adhel availed himself of the rapid instant when she bent forward to raise him up, to tell her mysteriously, "The Prelate will be here to-morrow ; but, ere his arrival, a word, a single word, in Montmorency's monument !"

That name had scarcely passed his lips when Richard drew near and interrupted him. The other spectators parted the two lovers ; from all quarters they came to inquire about Malek Adhel's absence : he refused to explain himself, but on his anxious and gloomy brow no joy seemed to follow his triumph. Soon Saladin, retiring to his tent, sent to desire his brother to come and join him. Malek Adhel obeyed ; he withdrew. Lusignan, sad, silent, and bruised with his fall, was casting wild looks on the ground, and remaining alone at a distance. The hasty Richard did not conceal his disappointment ; the mortification his brother in arms had met with wounded him sensibly, and reminded him of his own ; he could not endure the thought of an alliance with him who had humbled them both. A sort of consternation prevailed in that noble assembly ; every one seemed agitated with gloomy ideas, and Mailda's heart was not the least engaged. The Prelate was to arrive the next day, said Malek Adhel ; the council of bishops was to break up that evening : she must prevent it, she must announce

the Archbishop's return ; yes, she felt it requisite, whatever might be the dispositions of the council : if favourable to the Prince, she wanted the Prelate's approbation to adopt them ; if contrary, she had need of his presence to soften them. " My brother," said she to Richard, " the Archbishop will be here to-morrow ; surely the rank he holds in the church, and the high reputation of wisdom he deservedly enjoys, will not allow the council, when they have but one day to wait, to pronounce without him." On hearing this, Lusignan arose suddenly in anger. Richard assumed a stern countenance, and asked his sister how she could affirm that the Prelate would be at Ptolemais the next day. " The Prince told me so," replied she, colouring ; " he must have met with him somewhere." Lusignan said to Richard gloomily, " does your majesty permit the council of bishops to break up ?"—Before the King of England could find time to answer, the Dukes of Burgundy, Austria, Bavaria, and all the Princes and chiefs, exclaimed unanimously, it was but strict justice to acquaint the council with the Archbishop's impending return. Lusignan offered to reply, but they would not allow it. " My brother," said the Princess respectfully, " does it not seem to you that their judgment cannot be deemed fair and equitable, without it be confirmed by the Prelate's prudence and wisdom ? He has until this day guided my thoughts and actions, and is he to abandon me at the most interesting period of my life ? Consent, dear brother, that the council of bishops be made acquainted with the Archbishop of Tyre's return."—" You may send there," replied Richard spitefully ; " that affair interests you more than me, and has hitherto given me too much vexation not to make me regret I ever felt any concern in it." The Princess did not wait for a more obliging consent, and hastened to despatch one of her pages to acquaint the Pope's legate with what was passing. In the course of a few minutes, the doors were flung open, and all the Prelates appeared. " Well, my Fathers," exclaimed

ed Richard, "you have suspended your decision?"

—"The Archbishop of Tyre's impending return and the wish of the Princess have appeared two such powerful reasons," replied the bishop of Nazareth, "that one alone had been sufficient to delay our judgment till to-morrow.—During this discourse, the legate looked at the Princess with a mixture of pity and emotion, and, happening in the course of the evening to sit by her, he could not help telling her in a low voice, "Ah! my child, what have you done!" and then he stopped suddenly. The virgin was disturbed; she sought in his looks the conclusion of his speech; he cast his eyes to the ground to prevent her: she then endeavoured to restrain the violent emotion these few words of the legate had caused her, and replied in a faltering voice, "What have I done, my Father?—my duty I think, and I hope God will not punish me for it."

CHAP. XLI.

ON quitting Matilda, Malek Adhel made no doubt but that she would yield to his request, and meet him with the next morning's dawn at Montmorency's tomb. But, when she was left alone in her apartment, the Princess became the prey of the most painful uncertainty, and passed that whole night sleepless. Malek Adhel's words resounded in her heart, and obtained there a most affectionate hearing. Could she deny a few moment's interview to a hero who, perhaps, the next day, was to be the lord of her destiny; who often had exposed his life for her sake, and had saved Richard's; who, to obey her commands, had resigned eight days of triumph and glory to his rival; and who, by the number of his favours and the magnitude of his sacrifices, had laid on her such obligations, that, although her gratitude had become a passion, she fancied it was not yet strong enough, and did not sufficiently acquit her?

"I will undoubtedly go and meet him," said she to herself, vehemently, as if to stifle a secret murmur that rose in her inmost soul; "I have promised, nothing shall be denied that religion and virtue allow me to grant: and, when so important a day is at hand; when he, perhaps, staggering in his faith, wants my advice and encouragement; does not duty itself command me to go and see him?" But, in uttering that word "duty," the Princess gave it a feeble articulation, as if she felt conscious of its being misplaced. "Besides," added she, "is it not requisite I should know the Prelate's disposition, and the effect of his exertions on the Prince's mind, in order to ascertain what his opinion will be in the council of bishops, and endeavour to change it if it should not be favourable?" Dismissing then all other reflections, she determined to go next day to

Montmorency's tomb, previously to which she threw herself on her bed to taste a few hours rest : but, to rest on a guilty project !—could the innocent virgin have done it ? and could sleep close those eyes which the inward pangs of an alarmed conscience incessantly kept open ? but, the instant when sleep seems creeping on us, and our efforts to deceive ourselves begin to grow feeble, a thought starts up—then another ; they are no longer the fruit of an error we love, but that of truth, which recovers all its rights as soon as the will has ceased to detain error. Matilda could no longer steal away from the influence of that secret power ; vexed and disturbed, she abruptly left that bed where she was so far from finding peace, dressed herself in haste, traversed the oratory, and opened the windows of her balcony ; she paced it in silence : all was still ; she heard no noise, save that of the sea-waves breaking on the rocky shore. “ They also are agitated,” said she, “ but not so agitated as I am.” After a pause, she, added : “ Guide me, O my God, for I swear love shall not triumph over thee !” She continued to walk, but a religious disposition had just suggested better thoughts to her. “ When, in spite of decorum and propriety, I ventured to give Malek Adhel an appointment,” said she, “ it seemed to me as if I obeyed the voice of God ; and, by sending him to the Archbishop of Tyre's assistance, I sent him to knowledge and salvation. I, alone, could have induced him to make that sacrifice, I had no other means to bring about his conversion, since it could only be the fruit of William's cares, and I had not a moment to lose, since it was then indispensable that in less than ten days he should find the Archbishop, be persuaded, and bring him back before the breaking up of the council ; whence the Archbishop, secure in his holy dispositions, might employ all his eloquence in our favour. But now, what have I to say ? what reason of sufficient weight can induce me to take this step ?—his wish ! O heaven ! that were enough for me, but cannot be enough for

thee. If William have brought him back to thee, I shall hear only a little later that favour of thy mercy; and at least not have to blush at the manner in which I shall hear it; if he have persevered in his errors, and the Prelate's exertions have proved fruitless, what hope can I build on mine? Fool! ought love to give thee so much presumption as to believe thou canst succeed when that spring of eloquence and holiness has flowed in vain? and were I to learn that the Prelate's wisdom is going to stand up against the wishes of my heart, and were I to entertain the guilty intention of persuading him from it, can I hope that I should succeed? Is the Prelate a weak man, capable of abandoning the path of God and justice for the sake of human interests? am I not even certain, that, if he arrive to-day, he will at once repair to the council without even seeing or speaking to me? but if I can hope nothing from William's weakness, should I not apprehend every thing from mine, and do I not know, "that whoever loves and courts peril shall perish?" Ah! since that meeting is not indispensable, it would be criminal; and now, whatever may be my destiny, I must wait and be resigned——Silence, then, O my God, the voice of Malek Adhel, that speaks loud in my heart, and accept my sacrifice!" She then fell on her knees, bent her head low on the iron steps of the balcony, and bathed them with tears; for a long time her incessant and deep sobs were the only language of her grief. At last she proceeded: "To begin this day by submitting to the yoke of the heaviest duty, is it not a way to render heaven more favourable to my hopes? perhaps it may be moved at my efforts! perhaps it will reward me by moving the heart of Malek Adhel!—O sweet obligation to suffer for him! O divine Son of Mary! if his salvation is to be the price of all earthly happiness for me, deprive me of all that which I expected this day, that I may, for the sake of greater blessings, resign all the blessings of this world!" She ceased, and might then have slept, for she would not have sunk to rest

on a guilty thought. Meanwhile, the night had nearly elapsed amidst her perplexities; and, at the moment when the Princess, but half satisfied with her painful resolutions, was returning to her apartment, the stars fading away and the horizon tinged with the morning twilight, arrested her steps, and somewhat altered her mind's good dispositions. "Alas," said she, with profound emotion, "at this moment he is setting out, probably, not suspecting the cruel determination I have taken; he does not think my heart capable of such barbarous resolutions; he goes, hoping to meet me in that abode of death; he counts the instants, he accuses me, suffers—O great Parent! where is thy mercy? canst thou command me to afflict Malek Adhel? no, no, I surely exaggerate thy rigour. Alone, without guide or support, to avoid one fault, I am perhaps going to commit a greater. Ah! God of love and goodness, can there be one worse than to torture him we love?—If the Prelate were by me, his heart, less unkind, less cruel, than mine, would allow me to go and console the afflicted—Ah! thou weak and wretched creature, what darest thou imagine? would he not rather tell thee, that to compound with our weakness is to compound with destruction? canst thou be doubtful what order he would give thee? no, no, thou art not; waver not, therefore, in thy resolutions." As she finished these words, she tore herself away from the sight of that dawn which distressed her; she would not let that progressive light discover to her the anguish of Malek Adhel, and reveal the vain expectations he fed upon. Who could say at that moment which was most to be pitied of the two? who could say which suffered the most? she who imposed the sacrifice, or he who had to endure it?

Notwithstanding the surrounding obscurity, Matilda had too carefully counted the instants not to know the day was far advanced: then, only, she left her retirement, because the hour being elapsed, she no longer had to dread her weakness. Impatient to

learn whether the Prelate was arrived, she went to the Queen's apartment ; Bérengère pressed her in her arms, and said : " Sister, a happy presentiment warns me that your days of sorrow are over, and that this will open a long life of happiness before you."—" Happiness is much," replied the virgin, " but I have asked more than that of God."—" I venture to hope," answered the Queen, " that he will grant you all that you have asked ! See how every thing seems to prosper since yesterday ; on a sudden, Malek Adhel appears to obtain the last prize and the noblest victory, and, this morning, the Archbishop of Tyre is just arrived to determine the council according to your wishes."—" The Archbishop here !" inquired Matilda, eagerly ; " and how long since he arrived ? has he seen you ? have you spoken to him ?" " He has been above an hour in Ptolemais," replied the Queen, " and ever since he has been in secret conference with the legate."—" At this news, the Princess felt her heart palpitate violently, and was forced to lean against the wainscot to support her weak frame. Bérengère ran to her, made her sit down, and said, looking at her with uneasiness : " Most assuredly, I make no doubt, but this day will conclude happily ; but, if it should turn out otherwise, and you be under the necessity of parting with the prince, you would not have sufficient strength."—" For a short pilgrimage," replied the virgin, " I think I should have fortitude enough, but, for ever ! for ever !"—" She shook her head, raised her eyes to heaven, and shed a torrent of tears. At that instant the doors were thrown open, and a page announced the King and the Archbishop of Tyre ; Matilda, in dismay, rose to retire, feeling herself equally unable to encounter the impending excess of felicity or wretchedness ; but, before she had time to take a single step, Richard appeared, followed by the pious Prelate : and, hiding her emotion instantly, she respectfully bent down to greet them, and sat in silence, without even daring to raise her eyes to seek in the Archbishop's countenance what she

had to hope or fear. "My Father," exclaimed the Queen, "I rejoice that you are happily restored to us; what event can have protracted your absence so long, and what happy fate brings you back?"—"I was taken by the Infidels," replied the Archbishop, in a calm and grave tone, "stopped at Jaffa, where Metchoub commands, loaded with chains, and thrown into a dungeon; and, spite of the truce that suspends all hostilities, the vindictive Metchoub, unwilling to pardon me the share he supposed I had in the taking of Ptolemais, availed himself of his supreme authority to order my death. Already were the preparations making; I had but one day to live; and, humbly resigned, saw its end approaching without murmur; for, could I not say to myself, I have fought, finished my career, and preserved the faith? But in the middle of that night, which I looked upon as my last, I heard the doors of my prison bursting open; I thought they wished to hasten the hour of my doom; I walked forward to meet it.—What did I see; a warrior rushing to my assistance and breaking my chains, a deliverer!"—"On hearing this, the virgin screamed with joy and gratitude.—"And that deliverer, who was he?" demanded Richard. The heart of the Princess had guessed it.—It was indeed Malek Adhel, who had restored the Prelate his life and liberty! "I know not," added the Archbishop, "by what miracle of Providence he was conducted to Jaffa, when all seemed conspiring to detain him here; he has constantly refused all explanation on this point."—"That conduct covers strange mysteries," replied Richard, dissatisfied; "and it is difficult enough to imagine how Malek Adhel can have been conducted to the spot precisely in time when my sister and the Queen, alone here, knew the motive of your absence."—"These are mysteries, it is true," answered the Archbishop, "but mysteries of virtue and generosity that I shall abstain from diving into, out of veneration for that hand that delights in *shedding its favours in concealment.*"—"My Father,"

replied Richard, abruptly, "you are strangely prejudiced in favour of this Malek Adhel; all that he does, all that relates to him, is always excused or approved of by you; and I know not whether there may not be fair grounds to apprehend this partiality may bias your opinion concerning the judgment to be pronounced."—"Sire," answered the Archbishop, "I will not attempt to deny it, Malek Adhel is dear to me; I have conceived a truly paternal affection for him; his virtues would make it a law, did not gratitude make it a duty, for me; I shall tell the council of bishops, as I now tell you, all the good I think of that great Prince: why should I conceal it?—Is it necessary to be unjust to maintain all the rights of religion? and is not that the most equitable heart which knows them best? It does not become me to communicate to your majesty my ideas and projects; but, I venture to think, that the penetrating eye of him whom nothing can escape will be satisfied with their purity."—Richard replied, with some confusion, he was very far from suspecting their recititude.—"And had you suspected it, my liege," answered the Prelate, "should I have the right to complain? I am but a man, every man is frail, weakness and imperfection ever attend his steps; and being subject to error, he must submit to suspicion."—"O venerable saint!" exclaimed the virgin, in a sort of enthusiasm "you alone are the spotless lamb, above the corruption and censures of the world."—"Calm such transports, daughter," said William, "or save them for greater objects: none are pure and spotless on the earth, and all bear their sin with them: but let us not complain; that makes our glory, since it is our strength that frees us from it." The Queen then spoke, and asked the Prelate, in a timid voice, whether among the praises he bestowed on Malek Adhel, he could mention his docility to hear him. This question, which interested Matilda so stongly, since her whole destiny was comprised therein, disturbed her soul, and the glance she threw on the Prelate divulged it to him; he

turned aside that he might not see her, and answered the Queen, that, in gratifying her curiosity, he must, necessarily, discover the opinion he was going to pronounce in the council, and this his duty did not allow ; " I will even retire this instant," added he, " that I may not stand any longer exposed to indirect solicitations, which I cannot help hearing, and have no right to listen to." He said, and withdrew ; but, on the wrinkles of his venerable brow, the Princess perceived the signs of a violent agitation and inward struggles : with the attachment he bore Malek Adhel, could he have spoken in his favour, why should he not have been tranquil ? how did her heart palpitate at the melancholy thought ! how did she heap on a few minutes all the tortures of her whole life to come ! Pale, motionless, her eyes fixed on the ground, she saw nought but her fears, and for a time remained equally indifferent to the Queen's friendship or Richard's anger ; meanwhile, as he looked at her, he could not help at last being moved at her situation ; he sat down by her, took hold of her hand, found it damp and cold. " My sister," said he, " my dear Matilda, how does your piety allow you to attach so much price to earthly and transient objects ?" In a weak and inarticulate voice, she replied : " They are not earthly and transient objects that now engage my attention." The King examined her with surprise, and seemed musing deeply ; Bérengère, who stood by them, remained in silence, but a noise was heard in the next apartment. A page ran in, and said, " My liege, Prince Malek Adhel has appeared at the door of the Princess of England's apartment, and has asked to see her ; but the King of Jerusalem refuses, and swears he shall not enter without a special order from your majesty. The Prince, enraged, has drawn his sword, Lusignan done the same, and their blood will flow, unless your majesty go and appease the quarrel." At these words, Richard looked at his sister ; she was no longer the same ; a crimson blush suffused her cheeks, and her

hand, which he yet held, was glowing with heat. —“Strange creature,” said he, rising, “who could have suspected that such a timid and soft countenance concealed so many passions? Madam,” continued he, addressing the Queen, “command that young person to retire: she is not in a state to be seen.” He was scarcely gone out, when Matilda arose. “The King is in the right,” said she; “I am not in a state to be seen, no human eye ought to fall upon me, none can bring me consolation, assistance, and support.” —“Go into the alcove of my oratory,” said the Queen; “you will find there the consoler your heart is calling for; and through the curtains, which separate that room from this, you may, unseen, hear all that will take place here.” Matilda retired in haste. The confused voices of several persons, among which she could distinguish those of Malek Adhel and Lusignan, hurried her flight. On entering the oratory, she prostrated herself before the image of a dying Christ, and repeated several times, with fervour, those words written below the crucifix. “Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not my will, but thine, be done.” But soon these words, though so well suited to her situation, expired on her lips, and she could no longer pay any attention, save to what was passing near her.

CHAPTER XLII.

BERENGÈRE removed her seat, and placed herself before the curtain that hid the Princess, in order that she might the better hear all that was going to be decided respecting her fate. Malek Adhel advanced the first towards the Queen, and, with agitation, entreated her to stand Matilda's protectress for the day, and free him from the intolerable anguish that preyed on his heart since the dawn had appeared: the dawn of that day so important for him; that day, destined to be the finest of his life, had commenced amidst the most gloomy presages. "It seemed to me," said he, "as if the illustrious Matilda had disappeared from the surface of the earth. I demanded her from all the world; the awful silence of death alone answered me. Ah! madam, what is become of her? tell me what envious hand has snatched her from me?" Bérengère, who could not understand him, answered, with some surprise, that nothing alarming had befallen the Princess. Malek Adhel could not believe it; he made her repeat, several times, that she was at liberty, and that no accident had deranged her health. As many times as he questioned the Queen on those points, as oft she answered him with kind politeness; at last, when he was well convinced his fears had no foundation, he exclaimed, with much agitation, that he would not trouble her with any more inquiries, that he was satisfied and easy, and he took a seat by her, seemingly in more distress of mind than before. "You will agree, sire," said Lusignan, addressing Richard, "that, if any thing could add to the high reputation of benevolence and good nature the Queen of England has obtained, it would be the condescension she has just displayed in answering such strange inquiries." While he spoke, Richard was

watching Malek Adhel, who sat in the same place Matilda had occupied before. Pale, motionless, absorbed like her by one only thought, which deprived him of the power of hearing or speaking; struck with so remarkable a resemblance, he could not help exclaiming, "No! I never saw love like this!" The exclamation astonished all who heard it, and Matilda did not lose a word. Lusignan, apparently offended, asked the King, drily, what love he was talking of?—"Ah! my brother," replied Richard, taking hold of his hand, "I should have been moved, had it not been for you."—"Almighty powers!" said Matilda to herself, behind the curtain, and conscious of the presence of the Almighty alone, "the hearts of kings are in thy hand, and, if thou permit it, Richard will adopt for Malek Adhel those sentiments he feels for Lusignan!"—"Sire," replied the King of Jerusalem, gravely, "I too well perceive that I have no longer any hopes, save in the justice and religion of the council."—"And my justice, my religion, my oaths too," answered Richard, angrily, "do you then count them for nothing?" Lusignan, pleased with having galled him, exclaimed, in a feigned resentment, "And what matters that your majesty's oaths be not inviolable, if it is no longer your friendship that keeps them."—"Brother," exclaimed Richard, "this is the first angry word that has ever passed between us; let us swear it shall be the last." At these words, Lusignan threw himself into the King's arms, and, while they held each other embraced, Bérengère inclined her head towards Malek Adhel's, and told him softly, that she would accept of many days servitude to see him that instant in Lusignan's place.—"Alas!" replied he, "but yesterday I should have envied such warm testimonies of affection; but now my soul has only room for one wish—to see Matilda for a moment—to speak a single word!"—"Tell it me," interrupted the Queen; "I assure you it shall not be lost."—"No, madam," replied Malek Adhel, "she alone must hear it." Bérengère having watch-

ed to see if her husband did not observe her, made a sign with her hand, and pointed at the curtain, which parted them from the oratory, adding, very low and quick, "Well, I will move back, and she alone shall hear you." He understood her, and his heart leaped with hope and joy; he cast on the Queen a look expressive of such gratitude, that it occurred to her she ought to have looked thus at him on the day when he consented to restore her to Richard. The recollection of this soothed for a few moments the kind of remorse she felt at disobeying Richard's commands; for, if conjugal submission be a sacred duty, is not that duty sacred too which prescribes us to acquit the debts of gratitude?"

Malek Adhel would not then have resigned his place for the throne of Philip Augustus, or any other in the universe. He reclined his head towards the oratory, and remained silent for some time; and while the two kings, thinking him absorbed in deep reflection, were conversing together, and walking hastily up and down the apartment, Malek Adhel seized the instant, when they were at the farthest distance, to pronounce the following words in a low voice; "Matilda! do you hear my grief, do you listen to my prayers?" He then fancied he saw the curtains moved, as if by her hand; but, as the two kings were then near him, he said nothing, and concealed with his hands the hopes that beamed on his countenance. Scarcely were they at a distance again, when he added, "I waited in vain for you this morning, and yet how important was it for us to meet. Alas! if you are now too late to see the Archbishop, we are lost for ever!"—"O God!" exclaimed Matilda, in a pious oration, "when I tore my heart to obey thee, did I commit a fault, and wilt thou punish me for it?"—"Probably," said Richard, throwing open a window that overlooked the Square of Hospitality, where the assembly of bishops had been held, "probably the council is over; I see the prelates, and at their head the Legate and the Archbishop of Tyre, advancing this

way, to acquaint us with the result of their conference."—"My fate, then, is decided!" exclaimed Lusignan. "And mine too!" interrupted Malek Adhel. The same words, repeated by Matilda, mounted, and expired in the breast of that heavenly power he was invoking. The Legate and the Archbishop now entered. "Sire," said the former, addressing the King of England, "yesterday evening the council were disposed to give your august sister a Mussulman lord, and such our decision would have turned out, had we not been forced to suspend it. This day the eloquent and profound wisdom of the Archbishop has changed all our opinions, and we have pronounced an absolute refusal, unless, before the expiration of three days, Malek Adhel consent to receive baptism, and swear never to take up arms against us."—"I swear this very instant that shall not be!" exclaimed the Prince loudly; "do they think I must have three days to reject the commission of treason and perfidy!"—"Would it be a perfidy not to bear arms against us?" exclaimed the Archbishop; "the Christians demand no more."—"So," interrupted Richard, abruptly, "you reject the hand of my sister on the proffered conditions?"—"I only refuse to betray Saladin's confidence and friendship," replied the Prince; "and that illustrious beauty, who combines all perfections, ought not to be the reward of so vile an action! Could I accept such shameful offers! no, never; and the waves that wash this shore shall meet those of the Red Sea, ere I raise a sacrilegious hand against my brother and my country!" He sat down again as if unable to say any more, and in unspeakable agitation.

"Honourable Pontiff," said Lusignan to William, "how high you soar above the rest of mankind, and how unworthy are they to fathom the wonderful rectitude of your heart! Is it to you then that I am indebted for life; you, whose influence over the minds of the council I fancied I had reason to apprehend?"—"Sire," replied the Prelate, with deep melanco-

ly, "in this affair I have served no earthly being, listened to no interests; the zeal of religion alone has opened my lips; in this great cause it is God and his rights alone that I beheld, and no other had I any business to look to."—"I own that yesterday my opinion was contrary to the Archbishop's," said the Legate, "and in acting thus, I thought I conformed to the disposition of his apostolic Holiness, for I knew how favourably the letters written by Malek Adhel to Clement and Alexander III. had disposed the Conclave towards him." While he continued thus, Malek Adhel, taken up with a more urgent concern, resumed his pensive attitude, and availing himself of the noise that prevailed around him to express the wishes his life depended upon, he inclined towards the curtain, and said:—"Matilda, dost thou remember the oath in the Desert? Except the sacrifice of thy innocence and faith, thou didst engage to deny me no other; the time is come to make good thy promise; to-morrow we must meet in Montmorency's tomb.—This moment I mean to shut myself up there, and there will I remain, till thou comest; if thou come not, I will still remain, and some day by the ashes of the hero shall those of Malek Adhel be found!" The trembling Matilda crawled on her knees to the curtain, she applied her face against it, and the Prince thought he heard her breath. He said again:—"Matilda, wilt thou suffer me to die, and break thy engagement?"—"No," replied she, in so low a voice that Malek Adhel's heart alone could tell she had spoken. He was going to bless her, when he perceived the Prelate advancing towards him; he said no more. The Archbishop stopped before the Queen.—"Where is the Princess, madam,!" said he; "I am told she is in your apartment, may I not go in? I wish to see her, to speak with her, and to dispose her angelic piety to hear me."—"My Father," replied Bérengère, "wait a little; why should you be in haste? why rob my sister of the security she yet enjoys? Alas! it will be of short duration!"—

"When I can explain my motives to the Princess," answered William, "I will beg your majesty to hear them, you will see whether the interest, the purity of religion, allowed us to accept the proposed alliance. You will see whether giving her a Mussulman lord would not have exposed a young person's weakness to stagger some day in the path of the true faith, and make us all responsible for her everlasting fate?"—"No, my Father, you need not have forced it," replied Malek Adhel, "you know my past promises, but your inflexible zeal could not resolve on giving way." "The zeal that has heaven for its object cannot give way," exclaimed the Archbishop; "and, when we fight in that great cause, we must prevail at any price: he is no Christian, my son, who fears to show himself such; he is no Christian who can prefer the opinions, interests, and friendships of men to those duties he owes to heaven."—Malek Adhel replied, in a soft voice, and bending his head so that Matilda should hear him—"My Father, you have inflicted on me a greater injury this day than all mankind confederated together could have done; yet there is no man I esteem so highly as I do you, and I hope we shall not both quit this world without being first reconciled." He then advanced towards Richard, and told him, rather proudly:—"Sire, I am doubly unfortunate, first by the judgment issued, next by the satisfaction it seems to cause you. Methinks, that, had you expressed some regrets for my sorrow, it would not have been so bitter; but I perceive too well that all here have conspired against me, and that I must carry my hopes elsewhere—I leave you, sire; I am going to acquaint my brother with the bishops' answer; I foresee that, on the receipt of this intelligence, he will begin the war again with a fury more sanguinary, more inveterate, than ever, unless some event, equally happy and unexpected, turn aside this new calamity."

Every one present was astonished at Malek Adhel's moderation; Lusignan thought he could discover a mysterious meaning in some of his expres-

sions. He suspected that, before he went, he would find out some means of writing to Matilda, and drawing her over to his side; to overturn that project, he determined not to lose sight of the Prince; and, under pretence of paying him respect, he proposed to the most illustrious chiefs among the Crusaders to attend him as far as the limits of the camp. Richard was seized with pleasure at the opportunity of paying a Prince he esteemed this sort of homage; and, as he escorted him he expressed himself in terms of much courtesy on the price he should have attached to his alliance, had not the difference of religion and the honour due to his first engagements enjoined him to reject it. Malek Adhel, confident within his own mind that that alliance would take place, showed himself much affected at the King's kind professions, and they parted with all the marks of cordiality and affection.

Scarcely had the Prince arrived under Saladin's tents, when he took him aside, and said:—"Dost thou know on what conditions the Christians consent to give me Richard's sister?"—"On those which I have proposed, surely," replied the Sultan.—"No! they have rejected them; unless I embrace their faith and abandon thy cause, they will not grant me the hand of her I love."—"And thou hast indignantly resigned her?" exclaimed the Sultan.—"No, I have not," replied his brother.—"What sayest thou, Malek Adhel?" answered Saladin, with astonishment; "a shameful passion makes a traitor of thee, and an enemy stands before me!"—"Do not utter such expressions," interrupted the Prince; "they stain thy lips, and thou knowest well my heart belies them. I am thy brother, Saladin; how then can I now become thy enemy? Hear me! this is no time to deliberate. The refusal of the Christians is irrevocable; thou wilt go without doubt, but I shall remain here.—Fear not lest the Christians, finding me on their lands after the rupture, should treat me as an enemy; I have a sacred asylum in this place, where, I am not at liberty to mention; but thither

the Christians will not come to seek me. Meanwhile, I shall not be long ere I meet thee. Expect me at Cesarea; I beg but three days, and there I will bring thee my wife!"—"Thy wife!" exclaimed Saladin, with profound astonishment, "the Princess of England?"—"Herself! her heart belongs to me! her oaths are mine! I am certain she will not betray them. No obstacle can stop me, and I answer for the success of my enterprise.—Take with thee all thy warriors, I want none; Kaled alone shall remain with me; I know his fidelity and courage, and that is sufficient."—"Intrepid warrior, thy confidence inspires me with security," said the Sultan; "who fears nothing must triumph: go, make thy own destiny; hasten to bring the Queen of Jerusalem to my court; happy that day when I shall be able to greet her with that name, and place on her head the diadem I resign to thee."—"And, is this the man they wanted me to abandon!" exclaimed Malek Adhel, falling into the arms of his brother. The Sultan held him embraced a long time, after which they parted. Saladin, with his train, took the road to Cesarea, and Malek Adhel, followed by his faithful Kaled, advanced with him towards the sea-shore into a place where the projecting rocks formed a shelter. In that cavity he concealed his friend. He turned loose on the neighbouring mountain two Arabian horses, which had been fed by his own hand, obeyed his signs, and ran at his voice to meet him; he then came back, and shut himself up in Montmorency's tomb; and there, his great soul, broken by the weight of grief and of love, no longer felt the strength to exist without happiness. Before the ashes of the hero who had perished for Matilda, he swore to perish for her too, and bury for ever his misfortunes and his love in that asylum of death, unless she came herself to snatch him from destruction.

CHAPTER XLIII.

AS soon as the Princess heard that Malek Adhel had quitted the room, she withdrew from the oratory and went into the Queen's closet to wait for the Archbishop. There she endeavoured to compose herself, but in vain : anguish, confusion, terror, distracted her in turn, and contradictory duties seemed imperiously to exact the same obedience. On one side, Malek Adhel swearing to die on Montmorency's grave unless she came to meet him ; on the other, the scandal of a secret interview with a Mussulman whom the whole church had forbidden her to love ; that solemn oath pronounced in the Desert, which the Prince had just reminded her of, and which she could not break without perfidy ; religion claiming holier engagements still, and freeing her by its supreme authority from all such as interfered with her first duty. What was Matilda to do in that situation ? Was she to consult the Prelate ? But, if he should forbid her releasing Malek Adhel from death, she felt she could not obey, and then would it not be better not to consult him ? O ! how dreadfully big with calamities did futurity appear to her ! every where faults or sorrows—peace and happiness no where ! In short, that terrible futurity was such, that compared with it, the present time seemed to sink into insignificance. Taken up with what she foresaw, what she experienced was nothing ; and the circumstances that awaited her so completely overpowered all her thinking faculties, that the blow that had parted her from Malek Adhel was almost forgotten.—Strange proof of the confined extent of our apprehension, a violent grief rushes into our soul, breaks and tears it asunder ; but let another one more violent enter in its turn, and instantly the former is forgotten, and no longer felt, *though it still remains.* Thus Matilda, some hours

before, was on the point of being oppressed by the fear of the misfortune she apprehended; that was all then—it was death—it was worse than death. Behold, it came, it struck her, and she felt it no longer. Now her horrible confusion of tortures did but increase every minute; it threw into her looks a sort of wild despair, that made the Archbishop shudder when he approached her; he sat down, took her hand, and remained silent for a short time, for he suffered much, and his duty on that day had appeared to him painful to fulfil. At last, in a persuasive voice, and with looks of compassion, he said:—“Are you in a state to hear me, daughter?”—“I am, my father,” replied she with her eyes on the ground, and in a dejected attitude.—“Daughter, you must take that chalice of bitterness which God has sent you; you must accept it with resignation and gratitude even, for such great trials are the lot of the chosen few, and the Almighty does not call upon all his creatures to make such great sacrifices.”—“My Father,” replied the virgin, “he has received the sacrifice of my happiness, and I do not murmur at it; but, if my resignation please him, let him also accept the sacrifice of my life.”—“No, my child; he only asks for that of your happiness; he has left you life, that you may feel and renew daily your sacrifice without even murmuring; such virtue alone can make us deserve an everlasting recompense, and perhaps it is worthy of it.—Hear me, my dear daughter; I owe you an account of the reasons which have determined my resolutions, and of the fruitless efforts which I have made to bring Malek Adhel to adopt the faith of Christ.”—“And that misfortune, that dreadful misfortune,” interrupted Matilda abruptly, and looking up to heaven reproachfully, “am I to be resigned to that too?”—“In the course of my long life,” replied the Prelate, with patience and kindness, “I have seen many events, disasters, calamities, and horrid catastrophes; but I never yet knew of a situation where it was allowed not to be resigned to the will of heaven.”—“But, my Fa-

ther," answered the Princess, with much emotion, "is it *all* to be resigned? are there not situations where we should do something more? are there not times when God and our conscience seem as if at variance, and when that light he gave us, that we might know him, seems to forbid us to obey him?"—"Perhaps there are, daughter," replied William, looking at her with a mixture of grief and compassion; "but how can you know it? such criminal blindness was never but the consequence of great errors, and the most awful punishment the Almighty can possibly inflict."—"Heavens! I am very guilty then," exclaimed the virgin, striking her breast—"Alas! What remains for me to love, having lost the sight of God, and my ear being no longer open to the voice of justice."—She would have said more, and given free vent to her griefs, but the Queen appeared. Her confessions thus remained in her soul; they were too much above the power of friendship; for heaven, in giving us that friendship, the purest and sweetest of its gifts, does not permit it shall prove of universal efficacy on earth; but has reserved to itself the care of our most bitter pains, in order to teach us, that, possessing in itself something more perfect than friendship, it might comfort us when friendship proves inefficacious.

"My Father," said the Queen, as she entered, "I come with your permission to hear the account and the explanations you are going to give my sister."—Had the pious Archbishop been capable of a sentiment of impatience or irritation, he would then have experienced it, for he felt the importance of the confession he had just lost, and the difficulty he would probably find to obtain it again from Matilda. Accustomed, however, as he was, to see in the course of the least events an order of Providence, he resigned himself to this idea, and even thought, that, if the Almighty had allowed that confession to be interrupted, it was because he had a more favourable opportunity to conclude it. Bérengère sat down by

the Princess, and, after a moment's pause, the Archbishop began thus :

“ On leaving Ptolemais, I went at once to Cesarea. The Prince was not there ; I heard it from some inferior officers, none of whom knew me. They took me for a pilgrim who was availing himself of the truce in order to visit Syria ; and told me, that Malek Adhel was gone to Ascalon and Jaffa ; I followed him to Ascalon ; he had just left the place ; I went to Jaffa, he had not been there. I now lost all intelligence, and was recognised by Metchoub, who laid hold of me, and pronounced my doom as I informed you this morning. I likewise told you by what miraculous chance Malek Adhel came to deliver me the very day I was to be executed ; it was not the first time he has restored my liberty and saved my life ; already at Damascus, in Egypt, as at Jaffa, had it not been for him I must have perished on the rack. That generous Prince seems to have been thrown across my destiny to preserve me from all dangers, and teach me thereby, without doubt, that my first duty is to devote my life to his salvation. But the moment of success is not yet arrived ; probably heaven wishes so great a conversion should be brought about by other inducements than human love, and, perhaps, will not accept the return of that soul until itself be the motive. Whatever be the case, daughter, you may rest assured that I had no need of the new obligations, just contracted, duly to support the interests of the faith ; but, I own it, gratitude yet warmed the ardour of my zeal, and I know not whether a poor unworthy servant of God, as I am, he did not sometimes condescend to infuse some of his divine spirit into me when I spoke to Malek Adhel. Never will my tongue recover such expressions, and give them such utterance ! I have seen him hesitate when I was describing the miracles of that all-powerful religion, which, preached in its origin by twelve poor fishermen, has since spread all over the world, subdued the philosophers, by showing the vanity of their sophisms, and ~~Cesars~~, by

depriving them of their divinity; of that religion, that has filled courts and deserts with men so generous, virgins so pure, martyrs so heroic, and has revealed to the world virtues unknown in the times of antiquity. Ah! then it was the heart of Malek Adhel was agitated; he could not hear, without adoration, that law which says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who insult and persecute you." Such divine precepts belong to Christians alone, and such affecting words could only be pronounced by a God. Malek Adhel felt it deeply; he saw that charity and love were in us only, and that they made men more just and happy than all those proud sects whose vain and pompous speeches move much less than this passage: "If thy brother has trespassed against thee seven times in the day, and he come to thee as often saying, I repent; pardon him:" that great Prince, in short, felt, that the truth must reside in that religion which displays most virtues in us.—"O my Father," exclaimed Matilda, "if he have felt it, I forget my tears and my griefs; and, if Malek Adhel become a Christian, I may be happy, whatever be our fate on earth."—"Alas, daughter, what is faith without deeds? the better Malek Adhel is informed, the more guilty is he, and I know not where will be his pardon, who, having seen the light, has refused to follow it. What have I not done to bring him over? Perhaps, in my ardent zeal, I have gone beyond my office, and promised what heaven might not have ratified; in fine, I had consented to his not fighting against his country; I knelt down before him, bathed his hands with my tears, that he might acknowledge the Almighty's name.—He refused it: it seemed to him as if taking the name of Christian were the same as taking that of Saladin's enemy, and yet he engaged to leave you full liberty of worship, and, in secret, to adore the same God as you; but, if he had adored him in truth, would he have feared to tell the world so, and been stopped by the apprehension alone of offending his brother? and, since

he did not adore him, ought I, on the faith of a bare promise, to have consented that an Infidel should peaceably reign in Jerusalem? ought I to have engaged the Christians to give up to him that Ptolemais, purchased at the price of so much blood, and in uniting you to him, to have exposed you to dreadful dangers, my daughter? for, once united with that Saracen, blinded with his virtues, seduced by your love, forced to obey him, what must your fate have been? Have you the presumption to think, that, when amidst the most virtuous examples, it is so difficult to preserve the purity of faith, you would have remained true to it in a situation where the virtue of saints, and even that of angels, would fail? and what would have become of you, if, some day, Malek Adhel, subdued by Saladin's ascendancy—a terrible ascendancy truly, since it has hindered his adoption of the faith that moved him, and receiving that hand he wishes for with so much ardour; if, some day, as I said, prevailed upon by the Sultan, he had begun again to persecute the Christians, and shed the blood of your brethren—what part would you have taken between your husband and your God?"—"My Father," replied Matilda, in a feeble voice, "no more!—I was very certain that you would not allow me to give my hand to a Mussulman, and I am bold to tell you," added she, placing her hand on her heart, "that, if I had been alone its mistress, I should have pronounced like you."—"If such be your virtue," answered the Archbishop, with emotion, "if you feel within the strength requisite to take such heroic resolutions, why does not that same zeal support you, and why seem you so discouraged?" In fact, the Princess had just thrown herself back in her chair: exhausted by the various emotions and struggles which love and religion, the present time and futurity, had filled her heart with, she felt as if life were on the point of leaving her, and experienced a sort of confused joy that death was going to deliver her from the uncertainty and pangs of her situation.

She remained for several hours in this state of stupor, when her only pain was to feel all was not yet over : meanwhile, cruel and affectionate cares brought her back to all the poignancy of her anguish, and, on recovering life, she was forced with it to recover the recollection of her oaths, the impossibility of breaking them, and the disgrace of keeping them.

When the first shades of night began to cover the earth, Matilda returned into her apartment ; her will was fixed and her design taken : she was resolved to go the next day to Montmorency's monument where Malek Adhel was waiting for her, but she was likewise determined to confide that step to the Archbishop ; she did not wish to have explained her intentions before the Queen, but that very evening she purposed to see William and open her heart to him : she sent for him ; but, as he did not come, she began to fear she must decide without him ; she yet waited, and desired that her apartment might not be shut ; at last she heard some person, and opened her door ; it was not the Archbishop but Richard who appeared : " Sister," said he, " I am satisfied with you ; the day has been stormy, but thanks to the strength heaven has bestowed on you, you have made a great sacrifice ; you will do more still, and it is to point out to you what remains to be done that I am come hither. Sister, having submitted to heaven, your present purpose ought to be to serve it. The war will recommence instantly ; Saladin, enraged at our rejecting his terms, will rush on us with all the power of his arms ; Malek Adhel, more enraged yet, will lend him his invincible sword. The hope of reaching you will stimulate his valour ; you must not, therefore, leave him any hopes, and you must, above all, infuse a new zeal into our troops. All our European soldiers sigh after their country, and begin to murmur at all the dangers they run and the hardships they undergo to replace a Christian of Asia on the throne of Jerusalem : but, let them have the certainty of placing *with him* thereon a Princess of my blood, and you

will see them, filled with intrepid ardour, rush forward like heroes to meet the Saracens, crush them, and lead you in triumph into that kingdom where the tree of faith grew; which will, through your cares, raise up its drooping head, and extend its innumerable ramifications to the farthest extremities of the universe. You see, my sister, that, to induce you to accept of a marriage with Lusignan, the interest of religion alone ought to suffice, and I will employ no other; you see, that not a moment is to be lost; that, in the course of a few days, we must march to Cesarea, Ascalon, and Jaffa, in order to open the road to Jerusalem, and that I cannot allow you more than three days to prepare yourself to celebrate the august nuptials all Christendom demands of you."

On hearing these words, the Princess started with terror; a deadly paleness overspread her face; she looked at her brother, as if unable to believe what he said; then cast her eyes downwards, and made no answer: Richard resumed: "The silence you observe authorizes me, unquestionably, to conclude you adopt the wisdom of my views and the law of your duty: perhaps the modesty of your sex forbids your uttering your consent, but, provided you obey, I am satisfied. As a friend, as a Christian, I think I have sufficiently convinced you of the necessity of your submission, not to be obliged to show myself the angry brother and absolute king.—Meanwhile, you know what power such titles give me over you; you know, also, that weaknesses of the heart are not allowed to a young person of your exalted rank, and that, sitting near the throne, reasons of state ought to stifle all secret inclinations.—In short, sister, you have not forgotten, surely, the strict obligations which the extreme condescension I have on this occasion used, lays you under; if it were possible you could be ignorant of them, and delay to obey me but a single day, you would stand without excuse in my eyes, in those of the world, and, but too probably, in your own." The Princess blushed,

looked at her brother with surprise, and, after a long pause, said in a firmer voice than he expected, "It is within three days, then, that my fate is to be fixed. I thank your majesty for having informed me of it, and assure you I am going to prepare myself for it."—"You are truly my sister," replied Richard, pressing her hand affectionately, "and I see my blood in your courage."—"Sire," interrupted she, "on the eve of such a moment as this, I have need of tranquillity and solitude: will not your majesty consent, but for a single day, to give me back the key of Montmorency's monument; it is near the grave that we can rise superior to all human follies, and resign ourselves to the greatest sacrifices."—"Here it is, my sister," replied Richard, "but let it be the last time that you have recourse to it; the wife of Lusignan ought to have fortitude enough in her own virtue."

To snatch the Prince from the jaws of death, had Matilda known of any other means than asking Richard for that key, she would assuredly have employed them; and receiving it through an artifice, she was even hesitating to take it, had not that name of "*wife of Lusignan*" banished all her scruples. Richard arose then, and said: "I leave you to your reflections, your piety, and your prudence; if you listen to that last alone, you will reap better counsels from it than from the sight of these monuments of death, that serve only to heat an imagination, already but too much exalted." Matilda bowed, and he added: "I hope to-morrow you will admit Lusignan's visits without reluctance."—"To-morrow!" exclaimed she, "your majesty had promised to allow me three days."—"At the end of three days, indeed, you will form indissoluble bonds with him, but till then you must hear his transports and his joy."—Matilda answered distantly, that she should prefer not to have to hear them; but yet, that she would admit, without murmuring, all the persons he might think proper to bring to her.

Then, as she thought her brother was going to leave her, and she was anxious to be left alone, she arose, as if to bid him farewell. He perceived her wish, and, smiling as he went out, added: "See the Archbishop of Tyre to-morrow; he will confirm all your good dispositions; perhaps he will not be able to give you better reasons than I, but his eloquence may impress them on you with more success."—"Do you think then, sire," said Matilda eagerly, "that the Archbishop could approve of the marriage your majesty is proposing to me."—"Can you doubt it?" replied Richard; "have you not observed his conduct to-day? does he hesitate when the interests of the faith are at stake? Partial as he was to Malek Adhel, he alone, however, has spoken against that Prince, and, prejudiced as he is against Lusignan, he still will reconcile the minds of all men, and yours, in favour of that monarch, and induce you to accept of a match he looks upon as both sacred and indispensable, since it is for the advantage of the Christians." He said, and withdrew. Matilda remained alone. Richard's last words had struck her with dismay; she exclaimed, "No, the Archbishop shall not see me; I will not hear a word in behalf of Lusignan; dreadful marriage!—for me thy hymeneal torch shall never be lighted.—It was not enough to tear me from Malek Adhel, they want to give me to his bitterest foe, and William approves of that tyranny!—No, I will not see him!—he shall not hinder me from saving Malek Adhel!—By drawing too tight the bonds of my servitude, they have broken them asunder; and to-morrow—yes," added she firmly, as if to answer her conscience, "to-morrow will I go to meet him without consulting any friend! no force on earth shall stay me!"—She called Herminia, and told her to have her doors shut, to admit no one, not even the Archbishop of Tyre; and desired that on the next day at dawn her car might be ready to take her to Montmorency's tomb. Herminia obeyed, and withdrew. The Princess threw

herself on her bed, half undressed : she fell into that kind of lethargy that is not entirely unlike sleep, during which we cease to think, though we suffer still, and seem to have retained of life the sentiment only of its sorrow.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AT break of day Herminia entered her mistress's room, and informed her that her car and attendants were ready. Matilda awoke from her painful lethargy: she arose, recalled her ideas; the first presented her duty, and she stopped; the second, her union with Lusignan, and she went.

The car flew with rapidity, and they arrived.—The virgin alighted much alarmed; the more she felt within herself that she was acting contrary to her principles, the more haste she made for fear they should arrest her. She pushed the door, and entered without addressing to the Almighty a single prayer. Her steps were trembling and precipitate, and her spirits so much flurried, that she neglected all precaution, and forgot to shut the door after her. Malek Adhel did not think of it either: how could he think of any thing but Matilda? He ran to her, and embraced her knees. "Leave me," said she, distractedly, "leave me!" but she could not support herself—she staggered—her knees bent under her, and she sat down on the coffin. "O Saviour," said she, "here all ought to be tranquil; peace inhabits tombs: ah! when will it inhabit my heart?—Malek Adhel, why hast thou called me hither? what wouldst thou with me? what new sorrow am I to find? what new struggle have I to undergo? Speak, unveil thy projects; it is time thou shouldst inform me, that all may be over."—"Matilda," replied the Prince, with a mixture of surprise and alarm, "I never saw you in such solicitude, never was such anguish painted in your eyes; what is the cause of this agitation? Can you not recover a little calm, and give me a hearing?"—"He asks the cause of my agitation," answered the Princess, "when I am here, in spite of my brother, my duty, and my God".

and yesterday all Christendom tore my heart asunder from the heart I love ; and, bleeding, lacerated, as it was, commanded me, in a few hours after, to give it to the man I hate—within three days to marry Lusignan ; these are Richard's, these, too, are heaven's commands ! Cruel tyranny, from which my soul recoils with horror ; but what can I do to save myself, except to implore thy assistance ?—Shameful resource, which must stamp my name with indelible disgrace !—This is not all ; thou art in a place where death surrounds thee. If thou shouldst be discovered, a blood-thirsty rival will employ all his exertions to thy ruin, and perhaps succeed.—Near thee, I am the enemy of all my friends ; my country hates thee ; thou hast refused to acknowledge my God, and yet I remain here, I remain willingly ; my conscience storms at me ; I hear it no longer, or hear it only to be the more distracted !—This is my situation, Malek Adhel, and thou askest the cause of my agitation ! thou wishest I should be composed and hear thee !"—"No !" exclaimed he, with impetuosity, "no, I ask not of thee composure, but resolution. Come, my beloved, let us delay no longer ; the moment is at hand, and we must fly ; all is ready, to-morrow thou must be with me in Saladin's court."—"Rash man, what sayest thou ?" interrupted the Princess, terrified.—"Hear me !" said he ; "to induce thee, I will neither speak of the nuptials thou mayest be forced into, of my despair, nor of my dreadful vengeance ; I will only remind thee of thy oaths ; except the sacrifice of thy innocence, thou sworest to deny me nothing ; such were thy words in the Desert. Ah ! Matilda, I do not ask the sacrifice of thy innocence, I only wish to shelter thee from the reach of thy tyrants. Follow me to my brother's court, and let that be thy asylum ; there, in a palace reserved for thee alone, shalt thou dwell ; there thou wilt be hid from all eyes, and into which I will never enter but with thy permission ; all the east shall admire my inviolable respect and thy most angelic purity : I will silence my wishes, my prayers ; and, to entreat thee to

reign with me in Jerusalem, I will wait till thy brother be appeased, and thy God consent. In this thy retreat, none but Christians shall approach thee; thou wilt profess thy worship with entire liberty; and, if sometimes thou deignest to admit me before thee, I will assist at all thy ceremonies, and endeavour to bend my heart to adopt thy faith." "Oh! hadst thou in reality wished to adopt it," interrupted Matilda, melting into tears, "we should now belong to each other; far from blushing at my affection, I should pride myself in it; and near thee, far from dreading the eyes of Richard, the Christians, and heaven, I should call them to witness my felicity!" "Matilda," exclaimed the Prince, warily, "thou knowest Saladin abhors thy worship: he has sworn to extirpate it, and all that bear the name of Christians are his enemies: could I take the name of his enemy? ought I to have done it? for, in taking the name of Christian, I would have maintained it, and, in acknowledging thy God, I would have defended him—Defended him! against whom? But in this war that Saladin would have recommenced with new fury, I could not have fought! I must have remained idle and tranquil between two armies, in one of which I should have seen my wife and my God, in the other my country and my brother! To which side should I have carried my wishes? Name any oaths if thou wilt, not horrible and sacrilegious, and I will pronounce them this moment; but I see thee start. I have said enough, therefore, listen now to me. If thou wilt follow me; if, by that striking resolution, thou declarest against the council of bishops; the council, which has been swayed by William alone, will return to their former opinion, and permit thee to take the husband of thy choice; the Christians, weary of the war, will joyfully seize on that opportunity of accepting peace; hence it will spread over the two empires; human blood, now ready to flow, will stop again; thou wilt ascend the throne of Jerusalem, and, in ruling with more power than I over this vast Empire, the Christians will

truly reign in that city: my heart will be in thy hand, and thou shalt dispose of it as a sovereign: I will adore all that thou adorest; and one day, perhaps, all our nations, and my brother himself, won by thy virtues, will permit me to believe in that God thou hast received them from.—Matilda," added he, taking out of his breast the relic she had given him in the Desert, "if thou dost not swear on this object of thy veneration to be true to thy engagements, and follow me to Saladin, I will here vow not to survive thy refusal!" Struck by the Prince's arguments, and terrified at his last threat, the virgin exclaimed, pressing the crucifix between her trembling hands: "Thou speakest, O my God! yes, thou commandest me to follow him!" "Then," interrupted he quickly, as if afraid she would retract, "this must be done. Return to Ptolemais, preserve a profound silence, without even an exception in favour of the Queen or the Archbishop. To-morrow with the dawn, having ordered thy car, proceed in it to the sea-shore as far as the first rocks of Mount Carmel; no sooner wilt thou have passed them, but thou wilt be safe. Ask me not the means; they are infallible, and would take too long to explain. Away now; on the eve of success, let us not run a chance of detection." "One word more, Malek Adhel," said the Princess. "Not one," replied he; "all is settled, all is done away, Matilda; and remember well, that, if thou breakest thy promise to-morrow, thou wilt see me alone enter Ptolemais to seek the life of the vile Lusignan—perhaps thy brother's!—and die, overpowered by numbers, among thy Christians."

In speaking thus, he supported her in his arms, and led her towards the door in order to prevent any reflection coming again to thwart his hopes; they had almost reached the entrance, and the Princess was going out, when the door was suddenly pushed open, and the Archbishop of Tyre appeared. He saw, he knew them, and uttered a dreadful shriek. *Matilda* remembered only the Prince's danger, and,

rushing towards the Prelate :—" My Father," said she, in a stifled voice, " contain yourself ! a word may destroy him. Come, come away ; my guards, alarmed at the noise, may enter and surprise him." She then drew away the Archbishop, closed the door carefully, and at the same instant, as she had conjectured, perceived her guards, who, having been startled at William's voice, were coming to his assistance.—" Be not alarmed," said she, with an emotion she was endeavouring to hide ; " the Archbishop of Tyre, on entering the tomb, fancied some misfortune had happened to me, but he was in a mistake," added she, fixing her eyes on him ; " I have met with none." The Prelate understood her, and looked up to heaven with gratitude ; yet, if she had dispelled his alarms as to that mysterious appointment, that secret correspondence with the Prince caused him much uneasiness as to futurity ; he saw her on the brink of ruin, and felt it was time to hold her back ; but that his words might be more efficacious, he wished, before he threatened her with divine wrath, to show her its terrible effects. " It is yet early," said he ; " I wish, before we return to Ptolemais, your highness would visit with me one of those cottages at the foot of the hill."—" Willingly, my Father," replied she, " but from what motive do you wish it ?" " I wish," said he, " that you should for once behold what I see every day ; measure yourself the depth of that abyss wherein the passions precipitate us, and see the punishment heaven has in store for the guilty who fall into it." The Princess understood the reproach, complied with the order, and prepared herself in silence for the painful scene she was to encounter. She could not speak a word to the Archbishop during the way ; unable to impart to him the thoughts that engaged her attention, she could still less have recourse to other thoughts ; nor was the Prelate disposed to interrupt a silence which he thought was caused by repentance and shame, and which he

looked upon as the best preparation for the sight he was projecting.

He alighted with the Princess at a short distance from the cottage, and led her into an enclosure surrounded by a hedge of wild citron-trees; in the middle was a wretched hovel, where all announced sorrow and misery. Seated on a bench before the door, an old woman was spinning, while by her side two young girls, about thirteen or fourteen, were entwining rushes to make baskets. At the sight of the Archbishop they respectfully arose; and, having spoken a few kind words to them, he passed on. Matilda, with eyes cast downwards and a beating heart, followed in silence; they advanced towards a deep recess, formed by some rocks at the extremity of the enclosure, which was shaded by a few scattered pine trees. On a sudden Matilda heard screams; her heart was oppressed, for she thought the voice was not unknown to her; soon she perceived a woman, pale, dishevelled, lying on the ground, striking her breast, and uttering piercing shrieks. "O my Father!" exclaimed the virgin, drawing close to the Archbishop, "I know her! it is she! it is Agnes!"

"In the days of her modesty," resumed the Prelate, eyeing Matilda sternly, "Agnes was also fair; she was proud, she was the glory of our arms, the honour of her family;—but, a guilty passion prevailed over all her duties; and, now, behold! disfigured features, faded beauty, general scorn, deep wretchedness, wandering intellects, crime without repentance, and, consequently, everlasting reprobation, are the fruits of the weakness and all that remains of Agnes!" He was interrupted by that unfortunate woman, who, in a sharp and heart-rending voice, was calling on the name of Malek Adhel. "O my Father!" said Matilda, terrified, "let us away from this dreadful place; I have seen enough."—"No, not enough yet," replied William, dragging her towards the wretch, who, extended on the sand, was incessantly repeating, 'Malek Adhel! Malek Adhel!'—You know the whole crime; now you must know

the punishment, and what terrible vengeance the Almighty inflicts on those who scorn his holy laws."

The feeble and trembling Matilda drew near the rock that covered Agnes; and, leaning her head against the stone, she lent an attentive ear to the words the deplorable victim was uttering.—"Malek Adhel!" exclaimed she, "how long am I to see thee rolling down that precipice? A merciless God dug that abyss himself!—my own torture was not enough, but thine must punish me too!" Struck with what he heard, William knew that to a passionate heart the most dreadful torture is to view that which the beloved object undergoes: and, hastening to oppose the interest of love to love itself, he turned to Matilda and said, "You see, my daughter, heaven's vengeance is not blind; its piercing eye discovers the most sensible place in our hearts, and there guides the blow. When the day comes, and the Redeemer appears amidst the fragments of crushing worlds, he will realize for that wretched sinner the punishment she sees now but in fancy. She will then behold her ravisher plunged into an abyss of everlasting torments, which she is for ever doomed to witness."—"O my Father!" interrupted the Princess, joining her hands, "is that not too much rigour? Can so dreadful a punishment be thus inflicted on her by the God of mercy?"—"Daughter, if from her wretched abode she sent up a word of repentance, all would not yet be desperate." "Malek Adhel!" exclaimed Agnes again; "Implacable God! and thou, abhorred Matilda, when wilt thou cease to pull my heart-strings?—It distils blood, and I cannot shed that of my rival! I cannot hear her scream like me!—Malek Adhel! haste! hurry her down headlong by my side, make her forget her God, let me feast on her pangs and mortal wounds!"—"Save me, my Father," interrupted Matilda, in a terrified voice.—"No, no, save her not! do not save her!" interrupted Agnes in her turn, rising precipitately. "I heard her voice—that voice that galls me—that voice that has found entrance

into the heart of Malek Adhel. Do not save her;—I will seek—I will tear her to pieces! I will haunt her as she haunts me!" She stopped; her ideas grew confused again; others came in their place; new pangs arose to gnaw her; the phantom of Montmorency stalked, bleeding, before her; it seemed as if defending Matilda from her rage; it saved her, and fell under a thousand swords; but soon the thought of Malek Adhel returned, and obliterated every other idea. "It is he," said she, "he calls me!—destruction is at his side—I see it well—but he calls me—I follow, and destruction shall have its prey!"—"Now let us retire," said the Archbishop, supporting the virgin; "I will not pain you by contemplating such havoc any longer, your strength could not bear it." And, as they went, he added: "O my daughter! how great is our frailty, and how little ought we to depend on our own fortitude, since a single instant can hurry us from celestial glory down into the abode of darkness and grief!" Matilda made no reply, and he continued: "A man's seduction has caused the fall of Agnes:—my daughter, you knew it! yet, with that man did I find you this morning!" Matilda said nothing. "And where did I find you?" continued he; "whither had the blindness of love led you?—to a tomb! as if nought but its silence could forbear reproaching you!—and what then?—did not that silence speak to your soul? has death no voice for you? While you braved that same terrific power, suppose it had struck you—suppose you had expired by the side of Malek Adhel with words of love in your heart and mouth, where would you be now?" Matilda still made no reply. The Archbishop thought she was too much affected; and, making her sit down in the cottage, he bade the old woman bring her a glass of fresh water. The latter seemed to look at her with curiosity, and inquired of the Archbishop whether this young person was also ill, and if she were to remain with the other. The Prelate said no. "Marry, so much the better," replied the old woman, "for I cannot mind

two. During day-time she is quiet enough; but when night comes on, she makes such an outcry, one would think all the evil spirits had got into her: ah! she is a true reprobate for certain. The physician your charity sends has no hopes, though he comes every day."—"Good woman," said the Prelate, "whatever trouble she may give you, and whatever cares her condition may require, do not neglect any: rewards shall not be wanting."—"Ah!" said the old woman, "you have already paid me generously."—"And above all," interrupted the Archbishop eagerly, "do not forget my strict injunction;—if at any time of the day or night she show signs of returning reason, send for me instantly." The old woman promised not to fail; and the Archbishop, taking hold of the Princess's arm, supported her to remove from this abode of bitterness and sorrow. They mounted the car in waiting for them, and again took the road to Ptolemais.

Matilda, still pensive, had not uttered a word since they had left Agnes; when the Prelate, uneasy at such a long and gloomy silence, strove to divert her melancholy, by saying, in a tender tone, "Are you not desirous to know how long Agnes has been reduced to that last degree of shame and wretchedness?" Matilda raised her eyes, and with a nod signified she would hear the interesting account. He then said, "On leaving Damietta, Agnes came to take refuge under Saladin's protection, and there she greatly contributed to inflame his anger against Malek Adhel. Bent on your pursuit, she attacked the knights who were escorting you to the camp, gave up Montmorency to a whole army of Saracens, and became the assassin of that hero; when overpowered too herself by the Christians, she remained almost lifeless on the field of battle. Disguised since as a slave, she followed Malek Adhel to Cesarea, but he refused to see her; and, having heard soon after of the embassy despatched to the Christians to demand your hand, her fortitude entirely failed. Oppressed with so many sorrows and mortifications, her

head grew weak, and her reason forsook her; I will not say in what condition I found her on my last journey to Cesarea;—I should blush to show into what a degree of humiliation crime had precipitated this daughter of kings!—I begged she might be entrusted to me, and had her conducted to that cottage, in order that she might be indulged with all the assistance I can procure; but all my cares have hitherto proved fruitless; she hears nothing, knows no one; in vain have I drawn near to her, and have spoken soothingly. Malek Adhel alone fills all her thoughts—Malek Adhel, the author of her misery! O my daughter, remember *that*!”

Matilda, who, during this narration, had raised her head that she might hear more distinctly, looked down again as soon as the Archbishop had ceased: he waited for her reply; and, finding she made none, he added, “Have you nothing to say, daughter?” “My Father,” replied she, “I cannot yet—my head is almost distracted, and my soul severely oppressed. In two days time, at this hour, I know a place where I will meet you; there will I lay open my heart, weep over my ill-timed passions, and, perhaps, you will condescend to drop into my soul some of the dew of heaven!” She ceased; the Prelate insisted no longer. Meanwhile he was seeking in his mind where could be the place she wished to meet him. “In two days, said she; that is precisely the time which Richard has commanded for her union with Lusignan. As she is not ignorant of it, how is it possible she can consent to execute these bonds? My daughter,” said he, “you know that Richard has fixed upon that time to bestow your hand on Lusignan—are you ready to obey?” “And you, my Father,” interrupted she abruptly, “are you ready to command me to obey?” But without waiting for his answer, she added, raising her supplicating hands towards him, “My Father, I entreat you, do not ask me any questions; my destiny is fixed; it is, my Father; I am certain of it; for, from some magnanimous souls every thing may

be expected. Meanwhile, O my Father, let not those words, 'my destiny is fixed,' alarm you. It is fixed, indeed, but heaven will not be offended, nor will my duty murmur!" As she finished these words, the car entered Ptolemais. The Prelate left her with an injunction to reflect on what she had done, and not to forget, that, if God had placed trials and sacrifices in this world, he had awarded a recompense in the next. The Princess reclined on the Archbishop's pastoral hand, and ran to her apartment to hide from every one the violent agitations with which that morning's events had filled her heart.

CHAPTER XLV.

MATILDA had scarcely enjoyed a few hours solitude, when a messenger announced that Richard desired she would prepare to receive his visit with that of the King of Jerusalem. "They are coming, then," said she to herself, "and I am forced to dissemble!—to dissemble is the language of the world; can I not employ it once before I leave it?—To-morrow I shall have ceased to live in it, to-morrow I shall have nothing to conceal, nothing to expect!—O my God! strengthen my soul, support my courage! I mistrust myself alone! I am sure of Malek Adhel, for to be saved I have need of his generosity only; and his generosity is so great—O Lord, let me say it without fear of thy displeasure,—that all thy power cannot add to it!"

In speaking thus, Matilda placed herself before a table and began to write. From her extreme dejection, the tears that rolled in her eyes, and her profound resignation, it might have been thought she was tracing out her last and sacred will, written as it were, under the shades of death. She was engaged still in this occupation when Richard entered with Lusignan; she immediately concealed the paper in her bosom, and received the two kings with a grave and solemn deportment. Richard had observed his sister's movement, and his first word was to desire the surrender of that paper. "I entreat your majesty not to require it to-day," replied she with much dignity, "I protest it shall go out of my hands only to pass into yours." Matilda's manner awed Richard himself; he did not ask a second time for what was denied, and contented himself with saying, he trusted she would avoid any step that might injure her glory, and banish all thoughts contrary to the purity of the bonds she was going to enter into.

"Ah madam," interrupted Lusignan, throwing himself at her feet, "is, at last, so much happiness to prove my lot? do you consent to belong to me? No, my presumption will not dare to entertain such hopes, unless you allow it yourself!"—"You surely must have indulged this hope, since you are here," replied Matilda, distantly; "if you expected a refusal, you would not have attended to hear it pronounced. My brother," added she, "you have given me two days to prepare myself for my impending fate. I ask no more; but during this short interval, may I not be left free — may I not be allowed to remain alone? Lusignan hastened to prevent the King's reply. "You shall be free, madam, you shall be uninterrupted," said he; "I will not intrude on your retirement, and, during these two cruel days, which will appear the longest in my life, I will not appear before you; I would rather deprive myself of that happiness than enjoy it with your displeasure." He withdrew, and Richard resumed, in a peremptory and angry voice, "Sister, I begin to grow weary of your vague answers and eternal mysteries. Ever since your return to the camp, the Christians' attention has been more taken up with your amours than with the sacred cause that has torn them from their homes and families. Did the half of Europe carry war into Asia merely to witness the uncertainties and the follies of your heart? No; it is time all this be ended, and that other thoughts may fill the soul and feed the hopes of our warriors. As soon as a prudent and advantageous union shall have fixed your destiny, we will only think of following up our high and important undertaking. The day after tomorrow, sister, the torch of Hymen shall be lighted for you. On the following day your husband will march with me to Cesarea, lay siege to it, and storm the city. Lusignan will triumph over Malek Adhel, and prove to you by this victory that he is more deserving of happiness than that Prince. Now you have heard my commands, you know your fate;

not a tittle shall be changed therein. If you ask for an hour's delay, you will ask in vain. Dear as your happiness is to me, it is less so than the glory of our arms and the success of our projects. Hence private interest ought to give way to that of your brethren, and frivolous considerations ought no longer to delay our battles. Prepare, and resign yourself therefore; but I warn you, that, resigned or not, you will no less be Lusignan's wife within eight and forty hours." He said, and left her without waiting for an answer. Matilda was undismayed at his threats; her resolution was taken before he came in; it was the same still; and the King's anger had made no impression on her. During that day, a deep and gloomy melancholy was observed on her features and deportment; for she had banished hope from her heart forever; but no farther agitation was seen; she had perceived her duty, and was resolved to fulfil it.

At night she bespoke her car for the next morning; and, when her orders were given, and she remained alone, she said, "O thou Omnipotent! unable to consult any one, I promised silence; but, to keep all my engagements, and swerve from no duty, I hope I shall need only thy support and strength!"

The dawn appeared, Matilda left Ptolemais by the gate of Nazareth, and bid them drive to the seashore. A long white veil hid her face and shape. She was pale, her cheeks bore the traces of her tears, but her countenance was tranquil; and her eyes, raised to heaven, had somewhat soft and resigned that announced her purpose, and seemed to say, that, in giving up her soul to God, it was endued with that confidence which dreads nothing, and has much to hope.

Meanwhile, at the moment when she perceived the first rocks of Mount Carmel, a light blush intermixed itself with the lilies of her face. She placed one hand upon her heart, as if to repel all her force and will; the car was yet advancing. At that instant from the rocks two warriors, armed cap-à-pié

sprang forward with dreadful shrieks, and rushed towards the Princess. Her guards tried to defend her; but, on Malek Adhel naming himself, all arms remained palsied; Matilda then said, "Christians, do not offer a vain and useless resistance against an invincible Prince. If Malek Adhel be here, know that it is because I have invested him alone with the right of saving me from the tyrannical authority that would force me into an abhorred union. Prince," added she, turning towards him, "I have sworn to come hither—behold me! sworn to fly with you—I am ready to follow you; but remember also your promise. In that asylum, where I am going to retire, I expect to live in profound solitude, sheltered from all eyes, from yours even, and to profess my religion with entire liberty?"—"Yes, madam," interrupted the Prince; "I renew the oath in the face of Heaven and of all these Christians. You shall be obeyed, revered in Saladin's court as much, and even more, than in your brother's. Now let us hasten there." "A word yet," replied Matilda; "shall I be at liberty to choose myself the place of my retreat?" "It will be time enough to think of that, madam," replied he with some emotion, "when we are arrived at Cesarea."—"No, Malek Adhel," said she, "here will I be free to make my choice and name the place."—"You are, madam; whither will you be conducted?"—"There!" replied she, pointing up to the top of Mount Carmel, "into that holy monastery, for there only shall I be free to live in profound retirement, sheltered from all eyes, from yours even, and to profess my religion with entire liberty!"—"Matilda," exclaimed he in a violent rage "you have deceived me!"—"No, I have not deceived thee," interrupted she eagerly, "for I place thee before all earthly creatures in my mind; and were there no other than such between us, thou wouldest see me quit all to follow thee; but the hand that tears me from thy love, O Malek Adhel, is stronger than that of men and kings!—Hear

me but a moment," added she, falling on her knees in the car, "yet hear me! O thou, the only mortal I ever loved, if I follow thee among the Infidels, I stamp my fame with an indelible stain, and become an object of scorn and horror to my friends and my country: thus to stain my glory—is it not losing my innocence, and that innocence, thou knowest, Malek Adhel, is the only blessing I have reserved to myself—the only one I have preferred to thee!—Yet at this moment I consent to abandon all to thee that I may owe thee all. I consent to leave thee the only arbiter of my fate, in order that, if it be peaceable on earth, and happy in eternity, I may share my benedictions and gratitude between God and thee. If thou wilt conduct me into that sacred asylum I am pointing to, there I shall live revered by men, at peace with Heaven, and secure of my salvation. If thou shouldest drag me to the Sultan's court, disgrace will be my attendant, and the dreadful remembrance of my fault will make me live in remorse, and, perhaps, die in impenitence. Such is the choice I am to make, and thou art to pronounce. I place my life, honour, and a whole eternity, in thy hands: decide then, Malek Adhel, and see whether thou shouldest require me to follow thee." These words said, the interesting beauty, bathed in tears, prostrate, her hands raised to heaven, and bearing in her looks the combination of all that the earth contains most lovely and heaven most pious, waited without trembling for Malek Adhel's answer, well assured that there could be but one choice from the man whom she had invested with the power to decide.

The Prince said nothing; but did more. He drew near Matilda, ascended her car, raised her up, sat down by her side, took the reins, and directed the horses towards the monastery. The virgin, much affected, could find no words to express her boundless gratitude. She reclined her head on the hero's shoulder, and wept. Tremblingly, she ventured to press that unconquered arm, which might

tear her from her duty, and was going to restore her to her God. Spite of the modesty that weakened that movement, it was guided by so much love, that Malek Adhel's soul was deeply affected with it. Anguish left it, grief subsided, and never had he loved so ardently: he saw it in the eyes of Matilda, owed it to his sacrifice, complained no longer, murmured no more, and his sacrifice was repaid!

Never perhaps did duty and virtue obtain a greater triumph. Matilda, pious and resigned, was immolating her love and happiness at the Almighty's command; and Malek Adhel, noble and generous, was giving up his hopes and desires at the request of her he loved.—Both were yet free; they adored each other, they might live together for ever, and they were going to part! Liberty they possessed, futurity they saw, and yet who would venture to say that at that moment they were not happy? To find in our heart the force of resigning the most ardent passion, we ought to find therein also something more powerful and superior to all its joys. Passion is assuredly much, and its joys are great;—but they are the joys of earth; and whoever sacrifices them conceives a rapture beyond their power, or otherwise would they be sacrificed?

The car was ascending Mount Carmel; the Princess's women, astonished, alarmed, were following their mistress, all equally determined to shut themselves up in her retreat. The guards followed, and Malek Adhel's friend closed the train. Soon through the rocks and thick foliage of cedar-trees, they perceived the anicent edifice raised by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, as a monastery for nuns. Malek Adhel turned pale, Matilda stifled her sobs; again he addressed her: "Thy orders are obeyed; I do not repine, for I have not the power of resisting thee; but how wilt thou allay my terrors? This cloister stands on Christian land; and, being under the dependence of the Christians, they will tear thee from it."—"No," replied she, "fear it not, choos-

THE SARACEN.

most generous part, thou hast also adopted
east. Religion here will better protect me
the Christians than perhaps thy high walls and
could have done. In this hallowed place, a
wooden gate would stop the army of crusade
and my brother's rage. This sacred abode is
house of God himself;—to violate its entrance
a sacrilege!"—"One word more," added he;
perhaps in the exaltation of thy piety thou wilt
deem it necessary to devote thyself; perhaps thou
dost think my conversion can only be purchased by a
great sacrifice."—"Most assuredly I think
not," interrupted she; "but have we not consumma-
ted it this day?"—"Promise me then," replied he,
not to make any other, and not to engage thyself by
those terrible and indissoluble bonds, until I give thee
leave—perhaps I may, some day, my beloved,"
added he, looking at her earnestly; "the war is
kindled; Saladin calls me; but I feel now that my
arm will be weak against thy brethren, that I shall
be less sparing of my blood than of theirs, and there is
an event which might induce me to wish thee to quit
the world."

The virgin understood him, and melted into tears.
All the griefs the heart can know oppressed her.
Joined to the image of Malek Adhel's death, that
kind of divine mercy now offered itself; but it was that
of infinity, and is the greatest joy of the pious soul;
which consoles, but does not cheer it; for in religion all
is grave and solemn, even happiness itself. Bathed
in tears, Matilda reclined her head towards him she
had named her husband in the desert, and could
only utter these words: "Believe me, whoever
has placed a great duty above the vain pleasures of
life, is sure not wholly to perish when no more."

Meanwhile, the road grew more and more nar-
row, till the steepness of the rocks and closeness of
the trees and bushes allowed the car to go no farther:
the Princess then alighted, and said to her guards—
"I desire you will attend me to the walls of the
monastery; I wish you to see me enter, and be-

the gates close for ever on me, in order that on your return to the camp, you may be able to tell my brother what authority I have preferred to his own, and for what a master's sake I have left him! And you," added she, addressing her women, "if your intention be to weep and pray with me, you may follow; if not, avoid useless fatigue, and proceed no farther." On hearing these words, they all fell at her feet, kissed the hem of her garment, and begged never to quit her. Moved at this request, she held out her hand, exclaiming;—"Come then, we will pray together, here and above." She then turned round to Malek Adhel, took hold of his hand, pressed it in silence, for silence alone became such a farewell. "No," said he, "think not I would leave thee, while I can behold thee, though but for a few moments." Dismayed she answered:—"Haste away!—thou art on the land of thy enemies—I see thee surrounded with a thousand dangers."—"Matilda," exclaimed he warmly, "canst thou not love me enough to forget them? Come," added he, pressing her in his arms; "come, let me once more spare thee the fatigue of a stony path, under a burning sun.—O days of the desert, when she named me her husband! happy days, when we were dying together!—She would not have quitted me then, her life was nothing compared with her love; her God did not command then that we should part.—O Matilda, how much your heart is changed!"—"O my Saviour," exclaimed she, "thou who knowest all the assistance thou hast bestowed on me since my return to the camp, deign to inform him that all the efforts of thy power have not been able to change my heart; and that, at this moment, if I have the fortitude to resign him, thou accusest me, I feel it, of having found it neither in the fear of thee, nor of my duty, but in the interest of love alone. O Malek Adhel, had my crime endangered only myself, perhaps I might have cherished my sin; perhaps, to become thine, I might have consented to the ruin of my soul; but to save thine, O thou sovereign lord of my

"Life! I have been forced to resign thee." While she spoke thus, Malek Adhel pressed her passionately to his breast; but in that moment the forest had disappeared, and the monastery stood before them. A humble wooden cross was placed at the entrance, and they heard at a distance the sound of a bell intermingled with that of sacred hymns. The virgin, at the sight, seized with a pious terror, tore herself precipitately from the arms of Malek Adhel, "O Lord," exclaimed she, "it is not thus that I ought to approach the place where I have fixed thy abode! Pardon, O pardon, my errors, and deign to purify my heart." She said, and knelt down at the foot of the cross; her women and guards did the same; Malek Adhel and his friend alone remained standing; Matilda saw him and sighed. "O divine redeemer!" said she, in a low voice, "to grant me the greatest of favours, thou demandest, I perceive, the greatest of sacrifices—not to resign my husband, but to resign my love!—Alas! my will consents, but will all thy power suffice to complete it?" She then arose, leaned against the cross, looked at Malek Adhel, and added, more solemnly, "I will not permit thee to approach nearer; thou shalt not set thy foot within the sacred enclosure which Christians alone have a right to enter.—Farewell! here we must bid farewell—a long, long, farewell!—O holy Victim, thou who hast saved the world, deign also to save that man, to thee I leave him, to thee I intrust him!—Malek Adhel, hear his voice; let love give it entrance into thy heart!—Alas!" continued she, pointing to the church-yard she was going to cross, "love ends there, and with it all earthly felicities; but remember that other joys are promised to us: remember there is a place where we suffer no more and still love; there will Matilda expect thee." She said, and swift as an arrow she flew to the gate of the convent. He obeyed; he did not follow her, but ventured to ascend the steps of the cross, to see her for a moment longer. On the verge of entering the cloister, the virgin stopped,

turned round once more to take a last look of Malek Adhel, and beheld him embracing with his hands the sign of redemption ; it seemed to her as if heaven had heard her prayers. "O Lord," said she, "finish thy work !" She then extended one hand towards the Prince, pointed to her heart, then to heaven, and instantly hid herself from sight under the impenetrable grate of the monastery.

On losing sight of her, Malek Adhel fancied the whole world had fallen into chaos. He threw himself on the ground before the cross, and thought only of dying on the spot where he had parted from Matilda ; but Kaled, aware of his danger, drew near, and said, "Dost thou forget that every instant, while we remain on this land, may be our ruin ?"—"You may depart, Kaled," said the Prince, "and return to that desert world I wish no more to see ; my life, my all, is here," continued he, pointing to the monastery, "I will not part from my existence."—"If thou remain," replied Kaled coldly, "I remain with thee ; if thou perish, I swear to follow thee : and now dispose of my life ; thou art its master !" and he sat down quietly by his side. Malek Adhel looked at him ; he knew Kaled had never sworn in vain ; he saw his resolution was taken ; and he instantly fixed his own. He rose, pressed his hand, and exclaimed, "Let us hence, now she is safe, and think of saving my friend." He then walked away, while Kaled ran before, and called the horses that were grazing on the mountain : the horses came, the two warriors leaped on their backs, and gave them the rein. Soon Mount Carmel sank into a confused mass ; and the cloister, lost in the horizon, was present only in the hero's thoughts. A few hours after, he reached Cesarea ; Saladin waited for him impatiently ; the cares of war called him elsewhere, and he did not choose to leave that important city until he had intrusted its defence to his brother. "Malek Adhel," said he to him, "I do not inquire why thou comest back alone ; more important concerns than those of love

ought to employ us now. I am going to place Ascalon in a condition to stand a siege—a useless precaution, probably, for the Christians will not attempt it until they have reduced Cesarea; but I leave thee in Cesarea. Cesarea is therefore invincible, and I may bid my enemies defiance.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

IT was almost evening when the guards of the Princess returned to Ptolemais. They found the whole camp in confusion, Lusignan desperate, Richard raving, and the Queen and Archbishop distracted with alarm. During the morning, Matilda's absence had already caused some astonishment, and uneasiness had succeeded. About noon, Bérengère had gone into her sister's apartment, and, having found on her table a paper addressed to the King, had snatched it up eagerly; yet, not daring to deliver it herself to Richard, she sent for the Archbishop and showed him the letter, that he might give it to the King. The Prelate sighed; he no longer could doubt but Matilda had gone voluntarily, and employed dissimulation even towards him. This idea distracted him, for he well knew that she did not conceal her conduct when it was guided by pure motives. What could he think of a young and imprudent virgin, who withdrew her confidence from him, rejected his counsels, trusted to her own judgment, and surrounded herself with artifice?—Ah! virtue trod no such path. Meanwhile, before he condemned her, he wished to know what she had written to the King, and if she was then to be blamed; at least, he would learn whether it were yet possible to extricate her from the snare she had fallen into.

He went immediately into the King's apartment; and his hands crossed on his breast, his eyes cast on the ground, in profound silence, he delivered him Matilda's letter; Richard exclaimed instantly, "Is she then gone? gone voluntarily? O Matilda, Matilda, thou hast deceived us!"

The note contained these few lines :

" I leave Ptolemais in order to withdraw from tyrannical authority, and avoid a union I abhor. I know my brother too well to venture to ask *his* forgiveness : I have no hopes of its following so closely a step which most probably will appear inconsiderate ; but the forgiveness of *Heaven* I am sure to obtain ; for my intentions are pure, and God knows my heart."

" She is in the right !" Richard exclaimed as he finished ; " I never will forgive her !" and seeing the Archbishop preparing to answer him, he added, " that such conduct had no excuse, and that whoever should attempt to justify it would be equally culpable in his eyes." He then went out, flaming with rage, to despatch troops on all sides in pursuit of his sister. The Prelate alone had taken up the note ; and, on reading it, with his usual charity, the sentence that terminated it having a little calmed his apprehensions, he said to himself, " Since her intentions are pure, and she seems confident of obtaining *Heaven's* mercy, I may also forgive her ; and endeavour to believe that it was not to conceal a fault that she involved her departure in so much mystery."

The day elapsed ; Richard's soldiers had obtained no intelligence respecting the fate of the Princess, when the sight of her car and guards returning without her caused a general astonishment.

In a moment the news of her interview with Malek Adhel, and her retiring into the cloister of Mount Carmel, spread throughout the camp, and divided men's opinions variously. The greatest number admired the virtue and fortitude of a young virgin, who, at liberty to reign over a vast kingdom with the Prince she loved, had preferred the shades of retirement and penitence to a power and felicity which religion reprobated ; but Lusignan's and Richard's friends blamed her for having only prevailed over her inclination for an Infidel, and for not having accepted of a match all Christendom wished her to form. At last, the King of England, incensed at

the disturbance the news had created in the camp, and the influence a woman exerted over the souls of so many warriors, declared that a severe measure should put an end to so much confusion ; and that the next day, availing himself of the rights his birth gave over his sister, he would drag her from the convent where she had retired, and force her to give her hand to Lusignan. "No," interrupted the Archbishop, "this would be placing the rights of blood before those of heaven ; it would be a profanation against the Supreme Majesty, which I will never permit. Meanwhile, I demand, I insist on it, that the fate of Princess Matilda be no longer the first interest that engage our attention. Warriors, noble and generous warriors, it is time to forget both the existence and the beauty of that virgin. What, was it for her you girded on your swords ? Was it to obtain her hand you crossed the seas ? Are you not afraid lest the Son of Mary, incensed at your neglect, abandon you to your weakness, and deny you his assistance ? Leave Richard's sister, leave her to seclude herself far away from the world, if she chooses. Would to Heaven she had never appeared in it ! O ye magnanimous heroes, who came hither from all parts of the christian world to achieve the deliverance of the Holy City, raise up your souls to the height of your enterprise ! Behold that end alone, indulge that hope only ; run to Cesa-rea, and let that city fall under your blows. Does Malek Adhel defend it ? What imports it ? If you meet with great obstacles, do not you reap more glory ? March, then, whither the Lord calls you ; remember to serve him alone, and do not forget that you become guilty whenever you attempt to combine the interests of heaven and those of earth together."

He said, and all animosities were quelled, men's minds soothed, and piety resumed its empire ; Richard's anger and Lusignan's love alone yet resisted. They both fancied, that, as long as Matilda remained free, Malek Adhel's hopes would subsist, and

inflame his courage. Lusignan urged that point particularly. The Prelate answered, that it was very easy to calm such apprehensions ; and that, without forcing the Princess to give him her hand, there existed a certain mode to crush Malek Adhel's hopes.—“ Let her adopt it then !” exclaimed Richard eagerly ; “ and, without any more delay, let her pronounce her vows, let her renounce that world wherein she has appeared only to bring confusion and discord in her train !——Forget her, Lusignan. Since she rejects thy hand, she is no longer worth thy regrets. Go, my Father ;—while we are marching to Cesarea, go to that rebellious virgin, bear her the last commands of an offended brother ; let her know, that, if, at the expiration of a week, she do not belong to God, she shall be forced to espouse my friend.”

As he uttered these words, Richard's anger rose so high, that it would have been imprudent to attempt soothing it, and impossible to succeed ; the Archbishop bowed in silence, and the meeting broke up.

The war threatened to prove bloody, the camp was not safe, and Ptolemais might be attacked. The convent of Mount Carmel had always been respected by the Infidels. Richard, anxious for Bérengère, thought she would be more safe from perils in that asylum than in any other ; that very night, therefore, he took his leave of the Queen, confided her to the Archbishop, and recommended both to use their best endeavours to dispose Matilda to obedience.

Matilda, when she presented herself before the holy virgins of Mount Carmel, asking them for shelter, had thought it proper not to conceal from them either her name or rank ; but that confession, far from giving her words and deportment an air of pride, had only increased her humility. “ Do not behold in me,” said she to them, “ the sister of a powerful monarch, but an unfortunate who comes to purify her heart by your example, and to deplore her faults at the foot of your altars. My errors have

been great, surely; my repentance is greater; and it is under these auspices alone that I am desirous of being admitted among you."

Her sweetness, her modesty, and, above all, the contrition she displayed, moved in her favour these humble sisters whom her royal birth had not dazzled. In that austere retreat they knew no other king than God, no other kingdom than heaven, no other time than eternity. The bustle of the world was not heard there, and the storms of passion had no effect; all was calm, silent, and solemn. The laws of the order did not allow a word to be uttered but what concerned the interests of futurity and penitence; the war, therefore, that spread its havoc at the feet of Mount Carmel, would have remained unknown in this house of peace, had not the Archbishop of Tyre acquainted the pious virgins with the calamities of Sion, in order that their prayers might intercede with the Most High in behalf of the Christians. Had the pure spirit of the Gospel that reigned among them allowed pride to raise its head there, perhaps they might have felt vain on seeing that world, from which they asked nothing, and were entirely parted, having recourse to them in its calamities; and on finding that, however poor and obscure they lived, they were richer still than that world with all its pomps and glories, since they had some comforts to impart, in return for which it had none to offer.

Matilda was not surprised at the Archbishop's arrival; she well knew that his charity would not forsake her, and she was impatient to unveil her whole heart before him, but the sight of the Queen surprised and disturbed her. If her first sentiment was joy, because she foresaw the name of Malek Adhel would be pronounced by Bérengère, her next was fear, for she felt that her indulgent friendship, which forgave all faults, would, perhaps, weaken the efficacy of repentance. Meanwhile, on entering the august cloister, the Prelate, before he spoke to her, addressed the sisters in these terms: "Sisters,

the great ones of the earth take refuge near you. Satiated with vanities and sorrows, they come to seek after repose and consolations, and throw themselves into your arms, when the joy of their heart has ceased, and their pleasures have turned into mourning. A great Queen implores your prayers in behalf of her husband ; a young Princess wishes your instruction how to love God above all things ; and I, my sisters, I come to join my prayers with yours, that the defeat of the Infidels may restore to ancient Sion her worship, her temples, her honours, her children, and her glory."

At the voice of the Archbishop, the chaste flock obeyed. The virgins began their sacred hymns, and Matilda heard them. Matilda, kneeling by their side, shuddered at the sight of all these angelic souls raising themselves up to heaven to implore the destruction of the Mussulmen ;—alas ! it was asking that of Malek Adhel. The more it appeared to her impossible that the Almighty should deny the suit of these pious and fervent prayers, the more she rejected those religious sentiments to which she attributed so much power ; and, perhaps she never was farther from God, than at the moments when surrounded with smoking incense, divine hymns, and sacred images ; for then it seemed to her that these perfumes, voices, and angels, were incessantly repeating that she could not be worthy of Heaven unless she also demanded the death of Malek Adhel.

When the ceremony was over, and the Archbishop was alone with Matilda, he spoke to her thus :—" My daughter, when you came to shut yourself up in this place, you no doubt had formed the resolution of never leaving it again ?" The question made the Princess blush and look down in silence. The Prelate resumed :—" Had you confided to me your intention, your flight might have been more decent ; I would have attended you myself hither, and the world should have known I was acquainted with your designs, and approved your objections.— Yes, daughter, I approve them ! After the prefer-

once you have declared in favour of Malek Adhel, to receive the addresses of another man would have been an infringement of that delicate modesty, the first duty of your sex; but, to preserve a liberty that might induce a belief you are still attached to the world in hopes and wishes, would be yet a greater infringement. You have loved, my daughter—loved too much;—a violent passion is a fault at all times; you ought to have known that the Almighty will not permit us to attach ourselves with such fondness to transient creatures, or to pursue a mere earthly felicity with so much ardour: you were guilty, and deserved punishment: happy, a thousand times happy, that you were punished on earth. To expiate the follies of your heart, the Lord has for ever parted you from the object of your weakness; he has even raised such an insurmountable barrier between you, that any hope of passing it can only proceed from the greatest madness. Daughter of kings, would you let the world imagine that the love of a man has more power over you than the commands of the church? that the heaps of dead bodies, and the rivers of christian blood, with which the blind Mussulman will surround himself, cannot induce you to resign him? Rejected by that Infidel, can you not reject him also? Having no power over him, you still adhere to him; for, were it not so, why should you still adhere to the world?" He looked at her and ceased.

During his discourse, the countenance of the Princess, at times pale and dejected, at others glowing and animated, conveyed the various emotions of her soul. Confusion and pride, repentance and love, were equally depicted by turns. When the Archbishop ceased to speak, she reclined her head on her hands; and, after a pause of some minutes, she said:—"You know, my Father, in what profound peace I passed the first sixteen years of my life; the seventeenth is scarcely elapsed, and all the agitations and tortures the heart can know have distracted mine; it is amidst this perturbation that you command me

to resume my first engagement. O my Father, my lips may pronounce them, but read my inmost soul, and see whether it depends on me to bring the same dispositions."—"No, my daughter; they must have changed. It is no longer a peace of sweetness and innocence, but a peace of contrition and repentance, you are called upon to taste."—"Alas!" interrupted she, "I have suffered so much in the world that it is become an object of terror, and not even from the day, when my vows shall seclude me from it for ever, shall I be able to date my death; but, my Father, condescend to hear me; you will see what promise yet holds me; if your voice can set me free, all expires between the world and me; it vanishes, it sinks down before me, and leaves me buried as in my grave; dragging my heart, my recollections, and my life, under the dust of the tomb; it leaves me here, forgotten by every being, far when we have disappeared from their eyes, we are soon blotted out of their memories."

Matilda then began her narration, from the day when the Prelate had set out for Cesarea. She recounted the train of arduous circumstances, unexpected occurrences, and painful struggles and promises, that had brought her to the situation he then found her in. When she had done, the Prelate, who had listened to her with profound attention, and often with emotion, answered:—"Daughter, if that sacred book that was brought on the earth by God himself had ever been your guide, you might have avoided many errors; for what sin does the Gospel condemn most?—Pride! It was pride that allowed you to admit the Prince's frequent visits after my departure from Damietta; it was pride, that, with the view to operate the Infidel's conversion, made you pronounce the rash engagement of belonging to him alone; it was pride that, urging you to do more than your duty, led you into making that first appointment at Montmorency's tomb.—Daughter, simplicity is the true character of the Christian law. Satisfied with performing what the Almighty

prescribes, it does not seek to go farther, and withstands the temptation of doing good, rather than bring it about through reprehensible means. It was a generous wish to save my life ; but, unable to compass it otherwise than through a blamable interview, you ought to have relied on God for the care of my delivery ; and, firm in the path he has pointed out, to have left his providence to act, without thinking yourself called upon to supply its place. I have need of courage, my daughter, to address you such a reproach, for I am inexpressibly affected on seeing that you have done for me what love alone could not have obtained ; but the more gratitude I owe you, the more ought I to acquit my debt, by showing myself firm and strict against your errors. To save me from death, you have exposed yourself to fall into sin ;—this is one of those faults which pride exalts into virtue, and which the true Divine Spirit rejects ; for it tells us that death is no evil, since it is but the beginning of life ; but, that sin is a dreadful wo, for it is the beginning of death.

“ And now Malek Adhel has made you promise not to take the veil without his consent ;—Malek Adhel has, during a moment, been the arbiter of your fate. He might have dragged you away with him, he might have become the master of your eternity, and yet he has resigned all these terrestrial joys, the only one he is impelled by, to give you back to the God he knows not !—What strange things are passing in that Infidel’s heart ? you have incurred immense obligations to him, which heaven alone can acquit.—It will acquit them !—If my eyes have dived into futurity, the moment is not far, a few days, and the nations will be astonished ; a great example will arise in the midst of the world, and the Nile enrich itself with the spoils of the earth ; these wild places will rejoice, and the heart, that is now blind, will be filled with the knowledge of the Almighty.—This is enough, my daughter ; and now let us cast a veil on what we are not allowed yet to see ; and, in the mean time, prepare yourself

to adopt the discipline of their house ; for, I much mistake, or it will be your last earthly abode !”

Matilda obeyed. She stripped herself of her sumptuous garments, to adopt the humble habit of the sisters of Mount Carmel. Submissive to all their rules, she attended all their exercises, underwent the same austerities, united in the same prayers, and secluded her heart from their wishes, only when she heard them imploring the Lord for the entire destruction of the Infidels. In that abode of penitence, where it would seem there might be a perfect abstraction from all tender thoughts, she felt all reminded her of them ; if she underwent bodily mortifications, she compared them to those of the desert, and regretted them, though more painful : if, from the bosom of that peace, union, and love, which prevailed in the monastery, a single sentiment of hatred arose, it was against Malek Adhel ; and hence that hatred they bore him did but increase her tenderness : in fine, when she passed that church-yard, where all earthly hopes found their grave, there all her own revived, and in the depth of the grave her eye yet ventured to seek after that union her heart could not cease to cherish. But, while all surrounding objects thus recalled Malek Adhel, the Queen mentioned him no more. Either that Bérengère had acknowledged the force of the obstacles that separated Matilda from the Prince, or that the obstinacy of this last had offended her ; or that, more subservient to the injunctions of her lord, she wished at last to conform with them entirely, she no more uttered that name the Princess was always waiting for ; but, pretending to understand neither her grief nor her silence, she turned her eyes away every time Matilda's sought to interrogate them.

Soon new reasons came in support of Bérengère's resolution, and gave a worse colour to her sister's weakness. They learned the Christians had laid siege to Cesare, that they were preparing to storm the place, but that, defended by Malek Adhel, it

would probably make great resistance, or only surrender after a dreadful carnage. At this intelligence the Queen, mindful of her love alone, forgot her gratitude, and only saw in Malek Adhel a formidable foe who was aiming at her husband's life: the Archbishop was incessantly repeating, that if the Crusaders met with a repulse before the walls of Cesarea, that defeat would for ever rob them of the hope of returning to Jerusalem. The sisters were alarmed, the bells rang, the prayers recommenced with more fervour than ever; and Matilda, the wretched Matilda, for ever bathed in tears, and prostrate before the monastic altars, not knowing for whom she wept or prayed, uncertain what she should ask, but sure at the same time she could demand nothing but what would afford her fresh cause of grief, passed her days and nights without daring to address a single wish to that God she was for ever imploring.

CHAPTER XLVII.

STRONG with wide and deep ditches, high walls, a vast citadel, a numerous garrison, and the brave hero who had the command there, Cesarea, undismayed, saw the whole army of the Crusaders advancing to the siege. On the very first day, Richard and Lusignan, both fired with an ardour that bordered on rage, caused the place to be surrounded from shore to shore; their miners leaped into the ditches to sap the walls, whilst their archers were shooting arrows against the besieged, who, playing their engines from the walls, crushed the miners, and overpowered the besiegers with stones and missile weapons. Encouraged by the presence of Malek Adhel and thinking all practicable under such a gallant chief, they demanded to make sallies, in order that they might the sooner put an end to such a disastrous war; Malek Adhel refused it obstinately. True to his brother, he was resolved to defend Cesarea; but, while he fulfilled that duty, the lover of Matilda wished to spare christian blood, and save Saladin's subjects without attacking those of Richard.

This disposition gave his conduct a sort of timidity that emboldened the besiegers; the assaults became daily more terrible. Lusignan, exposed to all dangers, continued to encourage his troops, applying the ladders himself, and mounting the breach one of the first. In concert with Richard, he had undermined part of the walls on the eastern side. The intrepid Lusignan, advancing at the head of all his soldiers, spite of the arrows that rained upon him, with his own hand set fire to the stanchions. The wall fell, with a dreadful crash, into the ditch; but the Saracens, foreseeing the accident, had piled behind a huge heap of wood, which they instantly lighted up. The Christians mounted the breach,

found a bar of fire, and, astonished, they stopped ; yet, led away by Lusignan, they were on the point of passing it, and returning to the charge, when, on a sudden, Malek Adhel appeared on the spot. His formidable aspect, fiery looks, and terrible voice, frightened them more than the flames they had to encounter. In vain did Richard rally them ; in vain did Lusignan, alone remaining on the breach, call them back. The sight of Malek Adhel, armed with his scimitar, and preparing to rush upon them, had struck them with a panic : they ran down into their camp to seek refuge, and the King of Jerusalem, abandoned by his soldiers, saw himself obliged to follow them, and hide in his tent his rage and confusion.

Meanwhile, far from losing courage, he revived that of his soldiers. He made them blush at their terror, and promise not to fall back again. Then, with indefatigable zeal, he passed whole nights in building new engines, and days in proving them. He sent to the neighbouring mountains for stones to fill up the ditches : in short, he neglected no toils, shunned no hardships. Richard displayed equally emulous ardour ; and, having united, by a new bond, the labours they shared together, they both, at the same time, after having prepared all the engines of destruction, went and urged the army to a general assault on the next day.

That morning, amidst the sound of drums and trumpets, the cries of soldiers, and the creaking of the huge warlike machines, they made a general assault. Lusignan, Richard and the Duke of Burgundy, united their efforts against one of the strongest towers : they sapped the foundations ; and, from the top of the lofty machine that enclosed them in its huge flanks, and sheltered them from the enemies' arrows, they darted iron hooks in the wall, and shook it at the same time with the battering ram ; till at last, yielding to their attacks, the tower fell with a dreadful crash. Proud of this success, and secure of victory, the Christians crowded to that place to rush into the town ; but for the second

time, fire stopped them. An immense quantity of hay and straw, sending up volumes of smoke, served as a rampart to the Infidels, and blinded the Christians. The latter suspended their strokes, but did not give way. They hoped that the combustible matter once consumed, they should be able to pass freely; but scarcely was the smoke dispersed, when they discovered a new wall had risen on the other side—a wall of pikes, lances, and swords, no less formidable than fire, and much more impenetrable. In vain did they endeavour to advance; the Mussulmen, firm on their post, repulsed without attacking them.

Richard himself, at the sight of this new rampart, so ably constructed that nothing was seen but points of steel, and not the men who supported them, the intrepid Richard felt moved, and stood astonished: "Brother," said he to Lusignan, "rushing on that wonderful wall, we run to certain destruction; but dost thou not think we can throw it down, and thus open a passage to the Christians who are behind us?"—"I know not," replied Lusignan, enraged at the new obstacle; "but the time is come when I scorn the suggestions of prudence, and will have victory or death.—Fall back, my brother; for should I be crushed, thou wilt be able at least to make thy way over my expiring body to set Cesarea on fire, and destroy my hateful rival."—"Had another than thou told me to fall back," exclaimed Richard, raving, "it had proved his last speech! Come brother, let us perish together!"—"Christians," exclaimed Lusignan, "let not that wall appal you. Behind it are the palms of martyrdom and the sepulchre of your God, and thus do I entreat you to throw it down!" He said, and sprang forward; the Christians followed; but on a sudden that wall, firm as it was before, and without changing its aspect, advanced with prodigious velocity; the Christians, at the sight of that multitude of sharp steel points moving as if by enchantment, fell back and precipitated themselves, broken and discomfited, into the ditches. The de-

feat was general ; in spite of deeds of incomparable valour, Lusignan was dragged away with them in their flight ; the Duke of Burgundy, assisted by the French, offered for a time some resistance, and did not retire until all hope was gone.

Richard, from the breach where he was fighting, leaped on the other side of the ditch, and there stood still. Resolved not to give up his prey, he gazed on it ardently, forgot he was alone, that all his men had already retreated hastily into the camp, and, carried away by that desperate courage which acquired him in this war the name of *Cœur de Lion*, armed with his sword he was going to renew the combat. The Saracens recognised him less by his arms than his valour ; they quitted their threatening posture, and rushed forward to load him with chains, exclaiming, "The King ! the King !"—"The King ?" interrupted a well known voice to Richard, "the King ! alone and on foot !" The Saracens flew, brought the King a stately courser, and retired into the city, where Malek Adhel employed himself instantly in repairing the breaches and injured parts of the walls ; and Richard, ashamed of his defeat, and oppressed with the weight of a new obligation, went slowly towards the camp, not knowing whether hatred or gratitude prevailed most in his heart.

The whole camp was in sadness, the troops were discouraged, and a gloomy melancholy preyed on Lusignan. Standing in his tent, supporting himself on his lance, his coat of arms torn open and stained all over with blood, he meditated vast projects in silence, and, unable to owe victory to his courage alone, he was seeking what other means he could employ to obtain it. He concealed within himself the dark designs he was forming, and took care to withhold them from Richard. Richard hated artifice, would have scorned to employ it even to enter Jerusalem, and there was an openness of heart about him, as well as about the Christians, which would not allow them to accept of a triumph brought about by perfidy.

When Lusignan saw Richard entering his tent, he took hold of his hand, and said, "Brother, it would be useless to try another assault. Unless a victory come to revive our soldiers' spirits, we may die before the walls of Cesarea.—Believe me, Richard, let us carry our forces elsewhere; let us see whether Saladin may not be more easily overpowered than Malek Adhel. While the last thinks us engaged in repairing our disasters, this very night, at the head of our best troops, must thou advance towards Ascalon; if thou shouldst want the assistance of my arm, I will go and join thee; if not, I will remain here, in hopes that Malek Adhel, weary of his inaction, will at last make some sally, in which I may find him, fight, and perhaps conquer him." As he finished these words, a dark and ardent fire seemed to roll in the eyes of Lusignan, such as vengeance lights up in souls filled with hatred. Richard approved his project; he communicated it to the principal chiefs, and they all applauded it. The King of England then proceeded to divide the army: one half was to follow him, the other to remain under the command of Lusignan; and he desired that during his absence, all those Princes who obeyed his orders should also obey his friend's. No one disputed with Lusignan the glorious mark of honour bestowed upon him; the intrepid valour he had displayed during the two last engagements caused him to be joyfully acknowledged supreme chief of the whole camp.

Notwithstanding Richard's precautions, nothing escaped Malek Adhel's piercing eye; he knew that part of the army was leaving the camp, and marching through the woods round Cesarea; but he was ignorant what leader conducted it, or whither it was directing its march: various reports led him to think Ptolemais was the object—that mystery astonished him.—Perhaps he might have cleared it up by a sally, and, through winding passages well known to himself, have surprised the army and obtained an easy victory; but victory allured him less than fight.

ing disgusted him. The blood of Christians made him shudder; they were Matilda's brethren, and a sort of prophetic voice whispered to him the time was not far off when they should also be his.

The Crusaders, retired in their camp, had ceased their attacks, and Malek Adhel followed his labours in peace. He rebuilt the tower which had been destroyed, repaired the breaches, and strengthened the weak parts of the walls. While he was wondering at the little opposition the enemy made to the resistance he was preparing, the Mussulmen, who had gone down into the ditches to repair the walls, caught a soldier who seemed to watch them attentively. They brought him before Malek Adhel: at the sight of the Prince he seemed disturbed, turned pale, and endeavoured to hide, with his hand, the tear he could not refrain from shedding. Malek Adhel said to him, with surprise, "if it be terror that agitates thee thus, and thou dread the punishment incurred by approaching our walls as a spy, knowest thou thy judge so little as not to hope something from his clemency?"—"Ah! it is because I know him to be that magnanimous judge," replied the soldier, with a broken voice and striking his breast, "that I cannot forgive myself a perfidy!" "Thy perfidy! how? explain!—a sincere confession may make amends for all." "Alas!" replied the warrior, with a still deeper expression of grief, "there are perfidies which nothing can make amends for, and perhaps at the moment I am speaking, all is over with you!" "What dost thou mean?" exclaimed the Prince eagerly; "what have I lost? and what has perfidy deprived me of?"—"I can only tell it to you alone," replied the soldier, in still greater confusion. Malek Adhel made a sign, and all who were present retired. When they were alone, the stranger fell at the Prince's feet. "Ah!" said he, "I am not worthy to live. I have betrayed you—betrayed the Princess Matilda!—at this moment she is accusing you, probably, of not having prevented the new calamity!"—"Christian," interrupted the Prince, "what

dost thou say about Matilda and calamity? speak, speak out instantly! thy silence kills me.”—“My lord appease your anger, behold my repentance.”—“Away with repentance and anger?” exclaimed the Prince with impetuosity—“speak of Matilda!—let no terror stop thee. Whatever it be, thy pardon is pronounced.”—“Noble Prince,” replied the soldier with a little more confidence, “lend an ear to the account I have to impart, and may it please God that it be not too late!—I know not whether your sharp-sighted penetration has discovered Richard’s absence and Lusignan’s intentions.” Malek Adhel, whose heart began to forbode horrible disasters, exclaimed, “I have perceived a part of the army stealing out of the camp, but I am ignorant of their intention; hasten to explain it.” The stranger replied: “That same night which followed the day when you repulsed the Christians, Richard, at the head of his best troops, advanced towards Ascalon, in hopes of being able to surprise Saladin, and revenge our defeat. He left Lusignan master of the camp and commander over all the sovereigns; but, scarcely was the last left at liberty to dispose of the authority Richard had entrusted to him, when he told the council that, before he went to Ascalon, the King of England’s intention was to march to Mount Carmel. ‘There he is to wait for me,’ added he, ‘to give me the wife I love; to revive, by that august union, the drooping courage of our troops, and to revenge ourselves on Malek Adhel!’ He said, and all believed him. Attended by a few soldiers, he left the camp, took the road to Mount Carmel, no one opposing his departure. Long attached to the King of England’s service, I wished to ascertain whether he was in fact gone to meet his sister, and I followed Lusignan. What must I tell you, my Lord!—all the King of Jerusalem’s speeches were but a tissue of falsehoods, and his conduct a perfidy. Designedly has he removed Richard, and taken advantage of his authority over the Christians to deceive them. I have seen that impious King profaning the holy ground, breaking down the sacred grate, and the Princess of England,

pale and trembling, dragged before him like a slave but, merciless towards her, remorseless of his treason, he has caused the church to be decorated, the torch of hymen has been lighted, and he has sworn that another day shall not pass without the Princess becoming his. Meanwhile, among the warriors who had followed Lusignan, Herminia, one of the Princess's attendants, found me out, ran to me, gave me a paper, and said. "If to-morrow that note be delivered into the hands of Prince Malek Adhel, there is no reward, be it ever so splendid, that he will not bestow on thee!" She had scarcely said, when, perceiving Lusignan entering at the other extremity of the long passage we stood in, she flew away with terror and precipitation; but Lusignan had seen all: he approached and said, "Give me the paper thou hast concealed in thy breast, and this purse is thine." "Shall I own it, my lord," continued the soldier with tears, "I yielded to the vile temptation. The promises of the Princess might have been chimerical; Lusignan's gold was before me, and dazzled by it, I yielded, and he took the paper: but, alas! from that moment, distracted with remorse, and finding it impossible to witness the sacrifice that was going to be consummated, I sat off secretly that very night, led on by repentance, to Cesarea, hoping I should be taken, and be dragged before you, and thus, though unable to give you the note from the Princess, at least be enabled to acquaint you with her misfortune."—"And tell me," interrupted the Prince, trembling with the most violent emotion, "tell me the time fixed upon by Lusignan to execute his abominable attempt."—"My lord," replied the soldier, "this was the day; but perhaps the state of the Princess, and her entreaties, may have obtained a respite till to-morrow."—"To-morrow I will be with her!" exclaimed the Prince impetuously. "I would be there to-day, were it not indispensable for the success of my designs that I should not leave Cesarea till night, in order that the Christians may not see me depart." As soon as darkness began to

spread her veil, Malek Adhel sent for Mohamed and Kaled, his two most faithful servants. To the first he said, "Hear, Mohamed. Pressing interests call me away from Cesarea. During the two days that my absence will last, thou shalt command in my place. Be under no apprehension; thou wilt not be attacked, I am certain. Richard and Lusignan have left the Christian camp, and without them the Christians will not dare to fight. Thou, Kaled, select thirty of my bravest soldiers, and follow me in the perilous enterprise I am going upon. Kaled, if we find the enemy, let them be as numerous as they will, we will not fall back. Haste, my friend; a moment lost may be our ruin!"

Mohamed and Kaled, persuaded the foreign soldier had revealed to the Prince some secret march of the enemy, rejoiced on seeing him at last decided to fight them; both knew well that till then love alone had chained down the hero's courage, and now they flattered themselves at last that he had subdued his passion. From the instant he consented to march against the enemy, they were confident victory would no more forsake their colours; hence, filled with that hope, both went eagerly to execute the commands they had just received.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ON leaving Cesarea Malek Adhel took a long circuit to reach the woods that overlooked the camp of the Crusaders. He was necessarily obliged to cross them to approach Mount Carmel, and the wish not to be delayed on his way suggested to him a caution he would not have employed to secure his own life. At break of day he attained the brow of the hill, whence could be perceived the rugged summit of Mount Carmel, projecting over the sea. At this aspect he was no longer master of himself. A thousand griefs and fears rushed on his soul. He spurred the sides of his steed, whose swiftness so vied with the winds, that his men could hardly keep up with him. Kaled, the uneasy Kaled, seeing him rapidly take the road up Mount Carmel, began to conceive the most sinister apprehensions. He still followed his master; but he almost no longer doubted that his reason had forsaken him, and that love was the only cause of a step which he had attributed to much more glorious motives.

At some distance from the monastery, Malek Adhel stopped his horse on a sudden, and said to Kaled, "Dost thou know that Lusignan is here?"—"Dost thou come to seek only him?" replied his friend, sternly.—"I come to seek and punish him," exclaimed the Prince; "but I come also to free Mauda from his tyranny and hateful love. Come, follow me; let not any thing divert our purpose."—"I obey," replied Kaled, sorrowfully: "all remonstrances are useless now; but, had I known thy design, thou shouldst have had my bloody corpse to trample on, in making thy way out of Cesarea. Ah! wretched Prince, may thy imprudence cost thee no more than thy life!"—Malek Adhel heard him not; but rushed with his soldiers into the solitary court

of the cloister. All was silent there, and the great gate was closed. The Prince commanded that it should be forced, and the iron gate flew all to pieces in an instant. A drawn scimitar in his hand, he entered the house of peace, calling aloud on Lusignan and Matilda, but no one answered. The long passages were deserted: he listened, he caught the sound of hymns, and fancied they were those of the nuptials. He rushed towards the place it seemed to come from, crossed an interior court covered with weeds, and, behind all these Gothic buildings, the church, with its stately spire and painted windows, struck his sight. He ascended the steps, and through the door he saw the pavement strewn with flowers, while innumerable torches were sending up volumes of incense in thick smoke. The Archbishop of Tyre stood clad in his most magnificent robes, and, close to him, the virgin he adored was kneeling on the steps of the altar.

A stranger to the christian mode of worship, so august a ceremony seemed to him no less than the hymeneal one.—Though he could not perceive Lusignan, he made no doubt but he must be present; and, appearing on a sudden with his soldiers, he cried out, in a voice that resounded throughout the lofty arches of the edifice, "This way, Lusignan! Come, and dispute her, if thou darest!" Then, throwing down all that opposed his passage, without any respect for the Supreme Majesty of that Power whose presence filled the holy temple, he tore the affrighted Matilda from the altar she held in her embrace. At his dreadful aspect the sacred choirs ceased, and screams of terror succeeded. Like a flight of timid birds, the sisters ran in confusion every where; threw themselves into the choir, the sanctuary, and behind the altar. Before he withdrew, however, the formidable warrior again summoned Lusignan, and insulted him aloud: "Perfidious king! exclaimed he, "where art thou concealed? Thou who hast dared to offend me, darest thou not fight?" Matilda now lying senseless in

his arms, he only thought of saving her, and flew so swiftly with his load that his warriors could scarcely follow him.—At the foot of Mount Carmel he stopped near a spring: there he bathed, with fresh water, the face of his beloved; exclaiming in his wild transports, “God of the Christians, restore her to life, and take mine!” Scarcely had he uttered these words, when Matilda sighed, and revived. “Where am I?” said she: “Why do all the powers of my soul seem thus transported with delight? Is the sacred abode opening to receive us? Art thou to enter it with me, Malek Adhel?”

On hearing these passionate exclamations, to which the constant idea of the Almighty still joined so much innocence, Malek Adhel, intoxicated with unknown sensations of felicity, abandoned himself without constraint to the violent and profound effusions of his tenderness.—Kneeling before Matilda, he gazed on her and adored. He saw but her; he had banished every other thought, and enjoyed one of those moments of ecstasy, during which we may conceive something of heaven. Ah! could such felicity prove durable, who would sigh to quit the earth; but, when called upon to partake of it, we are probably on the brink of life; for it would be equally above human strength to support the prolongation of such ecstasy, or to survive its loss.

Followed by his soldiers, Kaled came to interrupt the heavenly transports his master was tasting. “O rash Prince,” said he, “how darest thou rest thus on this fatal land, where enemies, snares, and death surround thee!” These words reminded Malek Adhel of all the perils of his situation, which Matilda was sharing with him. He shuddered, he arose; his happiness had vanished. Gloomy terror had taken its place; for he was fearful of being surprised by the whole army of the Christians, and felt but too well that all the efforts of his valour could only purchase an honourable death, and not save her he loved. The idea of seeing her but for a moment in the arms of Lusignan disturbed him.

and, for the first time, he felt appalled at the thought of death. Now, attacked by every weakness, if he but heard the noise of the leaves, or the horses trample, he fancied he distinguished the distant approach of the enemy: when the long shades of night descended on the earth, and filled it with fantastical images, every where he fancied he saw a Christian, caught a spy, or beheld the army in battle array; in short, the very whistling of the winds, as they bent the lofty pines and ancient sycamores, struck his ear as the sound of warlike instruments, and the heraldic forerunners of action. Dismayed with his apprehensions, he advanced in silence, without even daring to speak to Matilda; while she, recovering by degrees from her terror, inquired why he had violated her retreat, and the promise he had made of letting her live in peace. "And thou," replied he, in a gloomy and sullen voice, "why hast thou deceived me, assuring me the Christians would respect it? Why should Lusignan have dared to enter it? Why did he force thee to appear before him? One day later wouldst thou not have been his wife?"—"What sayest thou, Malek Adhel?" answered the Princess, with profound astonishment; "since my departure from Ptolemais, I never saw Lusignan; and if I am to believe the Archbishop of Tyre, my brother has given up that abhorred marriage, and leaves me at liberty to devote myself to the service of heaven."—These few words were like a ray of light to the Prince: he saw that he had been deceived; and, although struck at once with all the alarming consequences of that perfidy, his first sentiment was that of joy. "At least," exclaimed he, "she belongs to me alone: her lips have uttered no wishes but for our happiness. Then, Matilda, the stranger who told me that he had accompanied Lusignan to thy cloister, witnessed thy despair, received a letter from the hands of Herminia, wherein thou imploredst my assistance; that stranger is an impostor?"—"Assuredly!" answered Matilda.—"Eternal Judge," continued the Prince,

"how didst thou allow impostures thus to appear under the colours of truth? But what do I say? It is not the traitor's artifice, it is my own heart that has seduced me. I have fallen into the greatest snare. From the instant he spoke of Matilda, I saw only thee; and thy name, like a spell, struck me with blindness, and destroyed all my prudence, to let my love act alone——O my beloved," added he, with a terror that affected his inmost soul, "at least, be not the victim of my credulity! The Christians, proud of this perfidy, will wish to reap the fruit of it: they are most probably waiting for us among these woods, and I cannot take thee back to Cesarea with safety; but how can we go elsewhere? How can I endure the shame of having abandoned the city I had sworn to defend? It will fall and I alone shall be the cause! O Saladin, what wilt thou say of thy brother? Take back thy love, Matilda: I am unworthy of it, since I have betrayed my duty and my country for its sake!" He stopped then, not daring to pursue his way any farther in the woods, where he was but too certain to be caught by the Christians. He called Kaled, and imparted to him the horror of his situation. Kaled looked down with consternation, for he felt, as well as the Prince, the impossibility of returning to Cesarea. He was equally certain that the army of the Crusaders must be waiting for them at some distance; and to advance that way would be the means of falling into their hands, or losing their lives in unequal combat. Flight was the only resolution they could adopt. But, how could Kaled resolve on giving his master such counsel? What would the East think of such desertion! Meanwhile, still less could he bear to see him in the chains of the Christians. On a sudden, amidst these perplexities, a recollection broke upon him, and a gleam of hope revived. "Master," said he, "if my memory do not deceive me, our life and honour may yet be saved. Opposite to the christian camp, on the west of Cesarea, facing the gate of Omar, is a vast excavation, which, through subter-

aneous passages, leads to a mass of rocks at the confines of the sandy plains of Jaffa. Since the Christians lost all the maritime towns of Syria, that darksome path has been abandoned. I recollect having explored it at the time thou wert engaged in the government of Aleppo, and when Saladin, at thy request, had confided that of Cesarea to my care."—"Must we make a long circuit to reach it?" exclaimed the Prince.—Kaled replied, the whole of the following day would scarcely suffice.—"Well, be our guide, and let us hasten away," resumed Malek Adhel, "for this is our only last resource."

The Prince and his attendants left the road they were in, and turned to the south. They traversed the vast forest that spread afar into the interior of the country, opening a passage through rocks, broken branches, and trees. At break of day, however, they reached the western skirts of those dark gloomy solitudes; and Malek Adhel, on regaining the open plain and the light, and having no surprise to apprehend, again became intrepid and fearless. While Kaled went a short distance, to seek for food in some labourers' cottages, which he saw about the place, the Prince wished Matilda to take some rest; he made her sit down on some fern, which he had hastily heaped up together, placed himself by her side, and said, "The injury the Christians have wished to do me, my beloved, will fall on them again; and when they shall know thou art in my palace, instead of my being in their chains, they will be sufficiently punished." The Princess sighed, and made no reply.—"What, Matilda!" replied the Prince, impatiently, "dost thou sigh after thy retreat, and regret being with me? What, when thy intention was pure, shall I not see thee bless the error that brings us together? and shall love alone, never, never, speak to thy heart?" Matilda turned, and gazed on him with a tenderness that the tears of repentance could not extinguish. "Ah!" replied she, "do not ask me to become more guilty. Can I dissemble to

myself the shameful joy my heart experiences, on seeing the impossibility of returning. During the whole night, while we were crossing in silence that gloomy wood, I was thinking of returning to my cloister; but I had no other way to do it than by asking one of you two to expose his life for my sake: it seemed to me that I ought not to wish it at such a price; and, meeting with an obstacle which ever way I turned, I also met with a pleasure at the same time. O feeble and faithless Christian! thy heart, swollen with love, longs after perishable joys alone, and sees, with terror, the road that might bring thee back to God!"

She said, and hid with her hands her shame, her love, and her tears. Malek Adhel exclaimed with transports, "O joy of my life, I now fear nothing! I am happy; we are together, and a whole life of happiness awaits us for ever!"—"Speak not of happiness!" replied the virgin, affrighted: "never speak of it again. Happiness was not made for us. Rash man, thou hast violated the Lord's temple, yet I am content to be near thee, and to hear thee talk of happiness! No, no! souls stained with such crimes cannot be happy; for, the more attached to that false and cherished felicity, the more deep they sink in misery.—O Lord, I see thy thunder rolling over our heads, and now the lightning strikes us! Ah, take but one victim; let all my blood be spilled, and redeem Malek Adhel's! Spare, O spare him!"

While she spoke thus, remorse tortured the soul of the timid beauty, and she spread her arms towards the Prince, as if to preserve him from divine wrath. Kaled now returned, offered them some refreshment, and said, "Let us hasten away, for we ought to reach the entrance of the subterraneous passage before night, that I may distinguish and find it." Malek Adhel felt all the prudence of his friend's advice; and resolved to deny himself the pleasure of conversing with Matilda until the moment he should see her safe in his palace at Cesa-

rea. Confiding her to Kaled's cares, and following them at a distance, he urged the rapidity of their march with all his power. During that day they crossed the extensive plains that separate Ramah from Cesarea, and reached, before night, the rocks Kaled had designated as the entrance of the cavern. There Malek Adhel stopped, uncertain what to do; thence he perceived, towards the west, Jaffa, where Metchoub commanded, and a little nearer, towards the north, his dear Cesarea. He determined to go to the latter place, but yet he doubted whether Matilda would not be safer in Jaffa. Was a besieged city, a prey to all the horrors of war, a safe asylum to take his adored beauty to? But then, was he not confident he could defend her? Was he not invincible when fighting for Matilda! Besides, Metchoub commanded in Jaffa—Metchoub, the enemy of Matilda. This reflection decided him. "No, no," said he, "I will not quit her. Calamities enough surround us already, let us not add to their number that of a useless separation." Taking the hand of his beloved, they advanced together towards a spacious aperture, dark and deep; but the path of which seemed to dive into the bowels of the earth. Kaled marched forward with the soldiers, holding bundles of burning straw in their hands: the Prince sustained Matilda's trembling steps. They rushed forward amidst all the horrors of that darksome cavern: sometimes the arch came down so low that they were forced, as it were, to crawl on the cold and damp earth, and glide between the rocks; farther on, they met with sharp stones, climbed with efforts steep and frozen declivities, or measured with the eye deep precipices, wherein detached stones were rolling down with a dreadful noise. Now and then when the light of the burning torches threw a greater glare, and allowed them to distinguish the interior of these immense caverns, they perceived sharp and transparent points of crystal and swarms of night birds, whose numberless generations had perhaps never beheld the day since the creation of the

world. The arduous and frightful way still prolonged itself. In spite of all his efforts, Malek Adhel could not save Matilda from fatigue : he never quitted her : oft he tried to carry her, but the difficulty of the path would not long permit it : her coarse woollen habit did but ill defend her against the sharpness of the rocks which hurt her delicate skin ; and, frequently, holding by them to support her steps, their sharp extremities lacerated her hands most painfully. On sight of her sufferings, the Prince's courage began to waver ; and soon he wholly lost it, when Kaled fancied he had missed his way ; and, going backwards and forwards, exclaimed, that the cavern, formerly straight and of a commodious egress, had changed into an endless and intricate labyrinth.

On hearing this, Matilda, exhausted with lassitude, remained on the rock she had climbed, almost on the point of fainting, while the Prince, growing desperate, snatched her up in his arms, and once was tempted to dash headlong with her down the profound abysses that surrounded them ; but soon his fortitude suggested another idea. He arose, advanced on one side with some soldiers, whilst others went another way, and thus succeeded at last in discovering the real issue : after this, he returned to the rock where he had left Matilda, and, in the course of a few hours, a fresher air announced to them they were near the extremity, and that the world was once more going to appear before them. They even fancied they saw a glimmering light through the fissures of the rock. Kaled extinguished the torches, and their light was instantly replaced by that of the moon, which pierced through the vault and thick festoons of ivy hanging over the entrance of the cavern. The latter now drew his sword, broke down that feeble obstacle, advanced a few steps farther, and Cesarea stood revealed to his sight.—He recognised the gate of Omar, and the sentinel that watched there ; he saw the black and yellow flags waving on the

walls and minarets,* and towards the north distinguished in the plain the christian camp, and the banners of the Cross. All seemed tranquil there, as well as in the city. The faithful Kaled was transported with joy that his master and the honour of Mussulmen were safe. "Mahomet has watched over thee," said he to the Prince, "and forgiven thy imprudence in consideration of thy past services." Malek Adhel looked up, and returned thanks to the power who had protected Matilda: he carried her in his arms, and conducted her to the gate of Omar. At the name of Malek Adhel the gate flew open, and soldiers, dressed in the Saracen habit, surrounded the Prince, who thought he was among his own people. "At length," exclaimed he, pressing Matilda in his arms, "the Christians will be the dupes of their perfidy.—Matilda is out of their reach, and Lusignan shall no more take her from me!" He said, and on a sudden the troops that were present rushed upon him, snatched Matilda and his sword away, and in a moment Kaled and all his soldiers were loaded with chains!—Malek Adhel knew not whether he was awake, or the sport of a terrific dream. "Infernal powers, where am I!" exclaimed he.—"In the power of the Christians and of Lusignan!" vociferated the last, making his way through the troops. "Cesarea and Matilda are mine, and thou art in my chains!" Malek Adhel, struck with dreadful astonishment, remained in a kind of stupor. A cold perspiration bedewed all his limbs; he cast round him threatening and desperate glances.—To lose all at once Matilda, his liberty, his honour—such was his fate! He had himself brought the beauty he adored into the arms of his rival, and Cesarea had fallen during his absence—Cesarea, which Saladin had entrusted to his care, and which he had sworn to defend to his latest breath. After such disasters,

* The black flag was that of the Abbasside Caliphs. The yellow one that of the particular dynasty of the Ayoubites, whose head Saladin was.

life became insupportable.—The remorse that distracted his soul silenced the very pangs of desperate love, and the shame of his weakness broke the pride of his heart. He looked down with confusion, bereft of strength and courage; nor did he shake his chains, but walked in mournful silence to the tower where Lusignan had ordered his soldiers to conduct him.

CHAPTER XLIX.

AT the instant when the Princess saw Malek Adhel loaded with chains, she fainted away. They removed her in that state into the palace which Lusignan inhabited; and, notwithstanding the numerous cares that were paid to her, part of the night elapsed before her senses returned: but what a moment was that, when she opened her eyes, and found that Malek Adhel was thrown into a gloomy dungeon, and Lusignan master of her fate and of Cesarea! On hearing the dreadful intelligence, she wrapped her head in her robe, to hide herself from the light; her heart was broken, and she could not shed a tear. She remained motionless, lost in her grief, divested of every other thought but this, which she addressed to heaven: "O Lord! is it by the extent of my faults thou measurest my punishment?" Several strange women stood round her, but she neither looked nor spoke to them. On a sudden the door was opened, and Lusignan appeared: he desired to be alone with the Princess, and they retired. The Princess at first shuddered, but she soon arose, and looked at him with an air of pride and dignity. He cast his eyes on the ground. That arrogant man who, in the intoxication of triumph, had indulged the gratification of insulting a rival in chains, was now trembling before a young female's angry eye, and knew not how to gather strength enough to encounter her reproaches and resist her prayers. But she did not seem disposed to use entreaties: humbled as she was, she could not stoop so low. Without changing her attitude, or raising her eyes on Lusignan, she said in a stern voice, "You are master of Cesarea, then, Lusignan. I died when I saw a hero loaded with chains; I might well conclude it was not my brother who had

the command here." "Madam," replied he, "the Christians are indebted to me for a great victory, and can the pious Matilda not rejoice at the success of the Christians?" "I should rejoice at it, indeed," answered she, "were not their honour dearer to me than their triumph, and had you not purchased it at the price of a treason!" "Our enemies could hold no other language," interrupted Lusignan, seemingly offended.—"This is the language Richard would hold to you if he were here," replied she proudly; "for his great soul scorns the very appearance of treachery, and his sister prides herself on thinking like him. Would that great monarch have suffered you to lay chains on the hands of his saviour, of the greatest hero in the world?" "Madam," interrupted Lusignan, in a vindictive tone, "you have a just idea of your power over me, since you are not afraid to talk thus in my presence of a rival whose life I hold in my power." "Sire," replied she, rather solemnly, "while I give Malek Adhel the justice that is his due, what can I have to fear from you? Do not you rather degrade yourself, by asserting that I alone prevent your committing an act of vile cowardice? To banish the base thought of it, it is enough that you are a Christian and a knight."—"Ah, madam!" exclaimed Lusignan, you have but little idea of the unconquerable flame that devours me, if you imagine that any other power than yours could stop the rage of a jealousy smothered so long."

As he spoke, he cast on the Princess looks expressive of so much ardour, that she was alarmed for the moment. She was alone, in the power of a passionate, and, perhaps, audacious lover, who commanded in the palace and the whole city; but she felt that the consciousness of virtue and the presence of God were two great protectors, and she had them both. Hence recovering herself, she said: "You always speak as if you alone commanded here; but are the christian Princes bereft of all rights and power? If they have assisted you to obtain you:

triumphs, ought they not also to dispose of the captives?"—"No!" replied the king of Jerusalem, vehemently; "no other than I command in Cesarea, for I alone have conducted the siege, secured its success; and, to leave me the sole disposal of a conquest which they owe to me only, the Princes had no need of the delegation Richard has made to me of his supreme power."—"So," resumed the Princess, fixing her eyes on him, "since you alone have secured the success of this enterprise, it must have been you, also, who sent to Malek Adhel that vile slave with a combination of impostures; who, skilfully instructed by you, has drawn that Prince into the most rash steps; and, if the sacred asylum, where I had sought shelter from you, has been violated by the Saracens, you alone are the cause of it."—"Do you make me responsible for their crime, madam?" inquired Lusignan, eagerly.—"And who more than you has committed that dreadful crime?" replied the Princess, more eagerly still: "Was it not your head that conceived it? And who is the more guilty, the Mussulman who gave the blow, or the Christian who guided it?"

These words struck Lusignan dumb; but he derived no other fruit from the consciousness of his crimes, than the determination to persist in them. Drawing near Matilda, with great agitation, his eyes inflamed, his countenance gloomy, and his voice tremulous, "Matilda," said he, "I love you with an ardour that I cannot express. I swear, by the living God, that you shall belong to me: you shall, at any price; and, before I resign that happiness I will resign my life!" Such an oath alarmed the Princess, and she moved as if to go out: he held her back. "No, Matilda, you shall not leave me. Long enough have I confined my love within the bounds of inviolable respect. When your brother had pronounced you mine, when all Christendom confirmed the union, I have endured your scorn without complaining. Since I have gained nothing when I revered you as a sovereign, perhaps I may

obtain more when I speak to you as a master. Hence I declare, that, to force you to be mine I will employ the whole extent of my power!" The Princess replied, indignantly, "When Richard confided his power to you, he did not think, probably, that you would make use of it to oppress weakness. O Lusignan, I have lived for a long time among the Infidels, but never saw I any capable of the mean cowardice the King of Jerusalem has just stamped on his character!" "I will not deceive you, Matilda," interrupted Lusignan, imperiously; "the more scorn you show me, the more firm you will make me in my projects. Since I never possessed your heart, and you withdraw your esteem, what remains for me to lose—your person! No; I vow I will not lose it! Matilda, I swear, in the name of that God we revere, if, in the course of this day, you do not consent to become mine, to-night shall my rival be deprived of life!" "Horrid blasphemy!" exclaimed the virgin, terrified: "Dost thou, O God, allow thy sacred name to be called upon as a witness to such engagements?" "Decide thyself, Matilda," continued Lusignan, (laying hold of her hand in a violent agitation,) "wilt thou be my wife?" "Never!" interrupted she: "the death even of Malek Adhel would shock me less than such a union; and I am certain he will bless me for not having hesitated in my choice." "Then," replied he, in a cold and sarcastic tone, "I am going to command his execution with the more pleasure, as he will die in his errors, and you will both be everlastingly separated in eternity!"

The Princess, at this dreadful idea, felt her blood freeze; a thick cloud spread over her eyes. Never had such bitter anguish torn her heart: she knew not what to think or resolve. Meanwhile, she exclaimed at length, "No; the christian Princes will never permit the perpetrating of such an accursed crime. They will rise up against such iniquity; against thee, too Lusignan. I will call upon my English, upon the great Albert of Austria, and the

Duke of Burgundy, whose well known generosity has acquired him the confidence of the French monarch." "Neither your English, Albert of Austria, the Duke of Burgundy, nor Philip Augustus himself, can save Malek Adhel. No one here presumes to give any orders besides myself. They might perhaps think their honour engaged in defending the life of their greatest enemy; but I can manage a *secret execution*, and thus shelter myself from all suspicion."

From the manner in which he uttered these words, the Princess thought she heard Malek Adhel's doom; she then with a solemn voice, a majestic countenance, and a celestial look, said to Lusignan, "And if human justice should absolve you, Sire, does not divine justice appal you? and do you forget that if you owe men no account of your crimes, the Almighty will demand one at his awful tribunal?" "I know it, Matilda," replied Lusignan, falling on his knees before her; "I know my crimes and what punishment awaits me, but remorse and fear are nothing before the desire of seeing you mine, and the horror of knowing you are another's. In short, at this moment, distracted by the lawless passion that consumes me, I cannot hesitate between you and eternity!" Such impious expressions crushed all the virgin's hopes. She had one left, however; but, feeble and confused, it was that of seeing Malek Adhel, and urging his conversion by the fear that she would give herself up to Lusignan. She told the King with disdainful pride, "Your criminal insanity might perhaps inspire me with more compassion than hatred, did I not see myself reduced to that pitch of misery to have to choose between a hero's salvation and your hand;—but, before I take my last resolution, I must see Malek Adhel."—"You shall not see him, madam!" exclaimed Lusignan sternly. "I know too well the heart of my rival to permit such an interview.—Rather than see you mine, he would open his eyes to the light, and perhaps consent to receive baptism.—No, no," added

he, moving as if going out, "reject me, in order that I may crush him in his errors!" At these words, Matilda, listening to her despair alone, ran forward to meet Lusignan, threw herself at his feet, and exclaimed, "O cruel Prince! if thou feelest no respect for a hero, no compassion for my grief, take compassion on thyself.—Thou art going to bathe in innocent blood, to stab a defenceless man! Remember thy master, Christian; these are not his precepts."

During this sudden movement, her veil, had got loose, and her hair, scattered on her shoulders, her supplicating attitude and the divine expression of her looks, added supernatural effect to her words. Lusignan, confounded, stopped and said, "Ah! heavenly beauty, demand my blood, my life—demand more still; I can do all for thee, except resign thee!" The Princess looked down, wept, and still kneeling, regardless of his efforts to raise her, added, "No, I will die here, if you persist in your denial. Hear, Lusignan; you have lost my esteem, but you may recover it; you may, if you choose, become in my eyes an object of veneration and eternal gratitude!—Lusignan, let those hands I am holding break the fetters of a hero: let him hear from your own mouth that he is free!" The weeping beauty ceased, but still kept looking on Lusignan, and entreated with her eyes when her lips had ceased to move. The proud monarch was touched; he promised every thing she wished—but that promise brought no comfort; there was in Lusignan's manner something which alarmed her, and the favour he granted had somewhat more sinister in it than his fits of rage. Palsied by an apprehension, the motive of which she could not mention, she remained in silence, when they were interrupted by one of Lusignan's officers. "My liege," said he, "on hearing the news of Malek Adhel's imprisonment, all the Crusaders have left their tents.—The Princes and Chiefs are in this palace; they demand to see you, anxious to learn what fate

you reserve for your illustrious captive.—Let your majesty lose no time, for the agitation is great.”

These words made Lusignan start. He took his helmet and his lance, and prepared to go out. “My lord,” said the Princess, spreading her arms towards him, “forget not your promise!” With a sneer, he said to her, “Fear not, madam;” and in saying thus he made her tremble.

When she was alone, she fell on her knees. Prayer was her only resource. Men had abandoned and probably deceived her; but he who never abandons or deceives, whose power surpasses all men’s, was yet listening to her; and, as she wept before him, the unfortunate murmured not; for, while she preserved her innocence, she had likewise preserved those gifts that are inseparable from it—confidence and resignation!

CHAPTER L.

WHEN Malek Adhel left Cesarea, Lusignan had been informed of it instantly. An arrow, shot to a point the impostor had marked out, had acquainted the King of Jerusalem that, success having crowned his best expectations, he might attempt new enterprises. He then assembled the army, told them Malek Adhel was no longer in the city, and proposed to give the assault. All the troops were in motion at the news; they wished to take advantage of the hero's absence; new engines of destruction were transported near the walls; never had the city been threatened with so many forces, and Malek Adhel was not there. Meanwhile, before the combat began, Lusignan sent forth a herald at arms to demand of Mahomed an interview: Mahomed accepted it. The King said to him, "Mahomed, I come hither to declare to thee that thou hast no other resolution to take, but to surrender the city into my hands; shouldst thou refuse, I will cause thy master's head to be cut off. Know that Malek Adhel is in my power; I surprised him last night as he quitted these walls. I demand of thee Cesarea for his ransom, and allow thee but an hour to decide." He said, and withdrew.

Mahomed, in dismay, had the impostor who had deceived the Prince brought before the council of emirs; he received from his lips the confirmation of what Lusignan had just imparted; he found that the Christians, warned of the Prince's journey, must have surprised him; and no longer doubting of his misfortune, to save the life of his Prince he opened the city-gates to the enemy. The Christians, wondering at such an easy conquest, asked Lusignan the cause, who attributed it to the cowardice of the Mussulmen. His first care, however, on entering

the city, was to throw Mahomed into a dungeon ; he then ordered that every thing should remain perfectly tranquil ; that the banners of the Crescent should remain on the tops of the mosques, and that the sentinels on the ramparts should preserve the Saracen habit. Such strange precautions, and a victory so cheaply bought, astonished the Christians.—The proud Duke of Burgundy, unwilling to tolerate any thing that had the appearance of treason, demanded an explanation of Lusignan's conduct, to which he replied with arrogance. "By what right," said he, "do you presume to interrogate your chief? have you not sworn to obey me? do I not lead and command you? what do you complain of? have I betrayed your cause? is not Cesarea in our power, and has it cost us the blood of a single Christian?" These words silenced the Duke ; he recollected in fact that he had promised to acknowledge Lusignan as supreme commander ; and, Cesarea being in their power, the mere suspicion it had been obtained by a fraud, was not a sufficient motive to free him from his allegiance ; but he then declared that he would not enter the city until Lusignan had given the army an account how he had obtained possession of it, and, followed by the French, he retired to the camp, refusing to quit his tents. Meanwhile he soon learned, that, deceived by appearances, Malek Adhel, thinking he was returning among his own people, had entered the city, and that Lusignan had caused him to be apprehended and loaded with vile chains. The generous warrior flew instantly to a hero's assistance.—He entered Cesarea, spoke to the Duke of Bavaria, Albert of Austria, and all the christian Princes ; he demanded whether they should not force Lusignan to explain his intentions with respect to Malek Adhel. All joined in his opinion, and ran to the King's palace, to demand the motive of his suspicious conduct, and Malek Adhel's enlargement. "Whatever," said Lusignan, "may be the importance of the reasons I have just laid before you, Princes, my determination is far from irrevocable.

When Richard shall have resumed the command, and I am no longer responsible for the fate of the army, perhaps my heart may also induce me to ask Malek Adhel's release; but Richard has alone the right to pronounce on his fate. I have just sent to the camp at Ascalon an account of the taking of Cesarea and our present situation. Richard's answer shall be our law.—Malek Adhel in the mean time shall be marched to Ptolemais; Cesarea is too near the seat of war.—Ptolemais, more tranquil, more secure, will afford a better protection for his life; here I would not ensure its safety."

Lusignan's reply prevailed, and all mistrust and suspicion vanished. It was even thought, that, having the supreme authority at his disposal, he had evinced much deference towards the Duke of Burgundy, for which they gave him credit. All knew that Malek Adhel was his rival, and they applauded the manner in which he had just spoken of him; hence his moderation silenced the unfavourable conjectures his equivocal conduct had given rise to in the minds of the Crusaders.

That very night Malek Adhel, attended by a strong escort, was despatched to the prisons of Ptolemais.

On the next day, when Matilda heard of his departure, she recollected Lusignan's sinister looks; horrible anticipations crowded on her mind, and in her transport of grief she called on the Archbishop of Tyre for assistance. Alas! where was that compassionate man, to whose breast she might have imparted her cruel alarms? Where was that pious Prelate, whom Lusignan would not have dared to remove from her?—where was he?—he was exerting himself to save her: to do more—to save Malek Adhel.

If he had not followed Matilda's ravishers out of the monastery, it was because he owed his first and most paternal cares to the pious sisters whom that event had thrown into confusion and dismay.—He first proceeded to sooth their alarms, and pray with

them ; and, when peace was restored to their retreat, he sat out on foot to Matilda's assistance. At the foot of mount Carmel, in the thick parts of the forest, he found some Christian warriors on their march towards Cesarea.—He stopped them, inquired whither they were going, what the army was doing, and whether they knew to what place Malek Adhel had carried Matilda. "Father," replied one of the soldiers, "the Christians are masters of Cesarea, where Lusignan now commands. The English Princess is in his palace, and we have just escorted Malek Adhel to the prisons of Ptolemais." The venerable Prelate was affected with the intelligence, his knees trembled under him, he sat down on the trunk of an old broken tree ;—the warriors proceeded, and he remained alone. "O heaven!" exclaimed he, accept my thanks ; Cesarea is in the power of the Christians, and the Princess is in safety!" But Malek Adhel was groaning in captivity. At that idea the good Archbishop could not refrain himself from tears ;—Malek Adhel unhappy ! and he forgot his wrongs, his errors, his sacrilege ; and remembered only his generosity. He reflected no longer, debated no more about what he had best to do, but took his stick, and walked on to Ptolemais.

At the city-gates he heard that a blind and raging mob were rushing towards the doors of Malek Adhel's prison, to deprive him of life ; a little farther on he learned that the disturbance was excited by some of Lusignan's secret emissaries, and he dreaded to find it true. "O Lord!" said he, "do not permit that so base a thought should have found admittance into a Christian's heart !" He hastened on, came to the prison, and was told that strict orders forbade the entrance of any one ; but to men like William, the harbingers of peace and love, whose only office is to alleviate the sorrows of their brethren, the gates of grief and death are always open. Conducted by the gaoler himself, the Archbishop descended into a deep and gloomy dungeon ; he heard stifled groans—recognised the voice—and his heart

sank within him.—“O God!” said he, “why hast thou brought him hither?” On hearing these words the Prince rose abruptly; and, as his chains shook with a horrible clanking, the Archbishop shuddered. Malek Adhel exclaimed, “William, William, my friend!”—“O my son!” replied he, falling into his arms, and bathing the Prince’s face with his tears, “my son, the Lord will deliver you!”—“Will he restore me my honour?” interrupted Malek Adhel with a sigh; “I have lost my honour, my Father; and that were a greater misfortune than the loss of Matilda.”—“My son, God may restore you more than you have lost; our possessions are very little compared with his wealth.”—“No no,” interrupted the Prince again, “all hopes of peace or happiness are lost for me;—I have betrayed my brother, abandoned the city he had entrusted to my care, been surprised by a traitor, loaded with chains like a vile slave, dragged into prison, and thrown on this straw, where I am to perish!”—“No, my son, you shall not perish!” exclaimed the Archbishop with energy; “the time is come to acquit my debts, and you shall hence instantly.”—“What can you, my Father, and what will Lusignan say when he no longer finds his prey—when his slave is gone?”—“What imports that!” rejoined the Archbishop; “you shall away instantly!”—“But, know you, that if I go hence, it will be with a view to join Saladin, to avenge him, and recover Cesarea!”—“Young man, why tell me this?” resumed the Prelate; “I did not ask you.”—“My Father,” replied the Prince, pressing both his hands, “I had rather die here than deceive you; and now you know it is an enemy whom you set at liberty, do you wish me to be free?”—“Lord,” exclaimed the Archbishop, “did he not save my life at Damascus and Jaffa? did he not break my chains at Damietta? did he not always send me back among the Christians, whom I incessantly excited against him and his people? wouldst thou suffer thine enemies to be more generous than thy children? No, I do no injury to thy cause

by this act of charity ; for, was not thy divine faith established more by virtues than victories, and hast thou not moved and converted more hearts by love than anger ? It is that master, who is all indulgence, all tenderness, who bids me save you.—It is not I, Malek Adhel ; it is he who now sets you free ;—that thought will perhaps stop your blows ;” He then took off his chains, laid hold of his hand, and said, “ Come, my son, come ; I know all the winding passages of this sad abode.—The Lord has permitted that I should visit them before, in order that I might be able to save thee now.”

They then advanced along narrow and gloomy passages. Notwithstanding the deep obscurity, those labyrinths were too well known to make him lose his way. The Prince followed him, his heart affected by some unknown power ; what he had heard and experienced suggested new ideas to him, and the Archbishop’s expressions seemed to him replete with truth ; but, previous to believing or even listening to them, he wished to wipe off the affront he had received, recover Cesarea, fight Lusignan, and was not yet enough of a Christian to conquer pride and the thirst of vengeance.

“ My son,” said the Archbishop, stopping before a large trap-door with iron bars, through which some feeble rays of light could scarcely penetrate, “ I should have come this way to visit you, but my arm was too weak to raise this enormous weight ; perhaps yours may effect it.” Malek Adhel shook the huge grating, and the bolts and chains fell to pieces. “ O heaven !” exclaimed the Archbishop, “ will the strength of that mighty arm be turned against us !”—“ My Father,” replied the Prince, falling on his knees, “ take compassion on me, and let me depart.—There is something about you that confounds me, makes me start at the performance of my duty, and speaks louder than honour.—Detain me no longer.—Soon I may call you back, soon I may be in want of all your mercies.—Life is hateful to me ; I am for ever parted from Matilda. Unable

to live with her, I shall be happy to die near you !” The Prelate felt tears trickling down his cheeks ; he laid his hands on the head of the Prince kneeling before him, and said, “ I bless thee, my son, and may the Almighty bless thee also ! May he endow thee with new understanding and knowledge, may the errors of the past be forgotten and return no more ; mayst thou acknowledge him whose hand has made the earth, and measured out the heavens ; for thy salvation is coming, and his justice shall be revealed to thee !”

A long silence prevailed. William resumed :—“ This door opens on the ramparts of Ptolemais. Thou art out of the city.—Conceal thyself in the sycamore-woods that surround it, and remain there till night ; then take advantage of the obscurity to cross the plain, and escape thy enemies ; but, go where thou wilt, thou canst not shun the all-seeing eye of God : his providence will not forget thee.” “ My Father,” said the Prince to him, “ will not you come also ? will you remain in this prison ? do you wish to take my chains ? will the Christians dare to punish you for my escape ?”—“ No, my son, no ; fear it not,” answered William. “ An excess of prudence may have induced them to hold you in captivity, to deprive you of the means of fighting ; but generosity pleases the noble children of Christ better than prudence.—Not one but will rejoice to hear you are at liberty, and return me thanks for having been the instrument of your liberation.”—“ O my Father ! what a people, if they were such as you describe ; and what a God, he who formed such souls as yours and Matilda’s !—Matilda !” added he, melting into tears ; “ My Father, I shall never see her again !”—The Archbishop replied sternly, “ Rash man, you presumed to take her from the Lord ; you thought the strength of your arm could encounter that of the Almighty ; see how he has made sport of your rashness !—Matilda will return to him ; she is his property. My son, you must think of her no more.”—“ Soon my Father,” added he, “ soon will

she be at liberty to quit the world; Malek Adhel will be no longer there to weep her loss.—Only tell her I give back the promises she made, and entreat her to give herself to God; she will understand that prayer—she will take it as my last farewell.” Then suppressing all the emotions that idea had caused, he rose, pressed the Archbishop’s hand to his heart, and said, “Farewell, my Father.—If I die without seeing you again, promise to come and weep over my ashes, and pray to your God for me!” Without waiting for a reply, he leaped out and rushed into the woods. The Prelate remained for some time in his place; he followed with his eye him whom his hopes already reckoned as one of his children, and when he had lost sight of him, he raised his hands to heaven, and addressed there those words of Isaiah: “O Lord! serve as a shadow during the day, hide those whom the sword pursues, and discover not those who are wandering.” He said, arose, drew aside the huge trap, and descended quietly back again. Having entered the dungeon, he sat down in Malek Adhel’s place, raised with efforts the chains they had loaded him with, entreated the Almighty to forgive those who crush their enemies, and expected in silence the fate that awaited him.

On a sudden tumultuous cries were heard, the door was burst open with a dreadful crash; he saw the populace armed with swords and torches, and the gaoler running before them, crying out, “They have broken the bolts, scorned all I could say, and demand the Saracen’s blood!” The mob rushed in, the gloomy dungeon was lighted, and they sought for the hero;—he was gone! The holy man was in his place, alone, calm, serene as the angel of the unfortunate. Seized with astonishment, the raving populace paused. “What do you wish for?” said the Prelate.—“The Saracen!” exclaimed they on all sides, “he who has slaughtered our wives and children, who has driven us from Jerusalem.” “Rash people, he is gone,” replied the Archbishop, “I have taken his sin on my head, and am charged with his

iniquity. See then whether you must have blood, and take mine if you choose it." On hearing these words, emotion took the place of anger; their hands began to tremble, and their swords fell at the august old man's feet: another voice now exclaimed, "Who has set him free? who has broken his chains?"—"Who?" answered the Prelate enthusiastically, "He who sent me to heal up the wounds of the unfortunate, to publish freedom to the captives?" He said, and the crowd believed the Lord had spoken through his lips.—No one knew of the secret passage, not even the gaoler himself; the Almighty must therefore have endowed a mortal hand with his strength, and the Prelate must have been guided by his arm. Why should they entertain any doubt of it? and with the saint present before them, why should they question the miracle?

Of all these enraged persons, William soon made repentant ones. After having quelled their rage, he made them ashamed, and breathed love and charity into those who before thirsted after blood and carnage. The repentant populace now offered to take him out of the prison in triumph, but he would not suffer it; he commanded silence, that it might not be remembered to what an excess Christians had carried themselves, nor whose hand had urged them on; and hastened to leave Ptolemais for Cesarea, in order to acquaint Lusignan with all that he had done, excite his remorse, pardon him, and, after having prevented his committing a crime, save him the disgrace of its being known.

CHAPTER LI.

IN these days of trouble and agitation, it might have been thought that, to wipe off the crime of one, all the other Christians had redoubled in generosity. While the Prelate was delivering Malek Adhel, exposing his life to save him, and only thinking how to preserve Lusignan's fame, Richard from the camp at Ascalon was writing thus to the last: "Injurious reports are spread against thee, but I will believe none. My brother may be accused, but cannot be guilty; yet how could he suffer chains to be laid on the hero who twice has saved my life? Lusignan commands, and Malek Adhel is in captivity! Brother, I am willing to hope that at this moment Malek Adhel is on his way to join his brother, and thou on thine to meet me, and engage him."

In the middle of the wood, Malek Adhel recognised the Duke of Burgundy and some Frenchmen, whose presence at first alarmed him. "Unfortunate hero, I was seeking thee!" exclaimed the Duke. "Since thou wert removed from Cesarea, a thousand apprehensions have prevailed in my heart. I wished to follow thee, but Lusignan had forbidden my leaving the camp, and unfortunately I had sworn to obey him until Richard's return; but yesterday, Princess Matilda, having laid aside her accustomed reserve, took me aside, and said, 'We are far from suspecting Lusignan, but my brother's deliverer is in the middle of his enemies, and no knight has the care of his person.' These words seemed to me like an indispensable order; hence, followed by a few of my brave Frenchmen, I ran to Ptolemais—Thou wert gone: they talked of miracles, and of a sedition; but the Prelate's name, intermixed with all the various reports, made me easy respecting thy safety. Meanwhile, I wanted to know

whither thou hadst turned thy steps, that I might protect thy flight. I concluded thou wouldst try to join thy brother—that was the road of honour, and must have been thine. I have followed the road to Ascalon, found thee, and am satisfied. Here is a horse, here are arms, for thee! Go! noble warrior, resume thy place in Saladin's army, while I hasten to inform the Princess Matilda that her commands have been executed, and will expect thee in the fields of Ascalon."—"Yes, I will meet thee there," replied the Prince, deeply affected; "but since, vanquished as I am, I do not appear to thee unworthy of carrying thy sword, give me thy helmet, and condescend to take mine. Thus, amidst the rage and confusion of the battle, I shall be able at least to respect my benefactor. He said, the two heroes embraced each other with mutual esteem and affection, deplored their being enemies, and took leave of each other for ever.

Malek Adhel arrived under the walls of Ascalon, and entered the city, in which consternation reigned. The capture of Cesarea had thrown dismay and affliction every where.—He crossed the silent streets: that people, formerly so joyful at the sight of him, saw him and remained dumb; he entered the palace of his brother, who on perceiving him exclaimed, "O Malek Adhel! when I entrusted Cesarea to thy care, I did not think to see thee again thus!" The hero stood before him, looked down, and in the humblest attitude replied, "Saladin, I am guilty! I have disgraced the glorious name of the Ayoubites; I am not worthy of being called thy brother: I have betrayed my duty, my oaths, all! Lusignan commands in Cesarea; he is master of those walls thou hadst confided to my care!"

He ceased, unable to proceed in expressing what he felt. The Sultan's stern brow relaxed a little. "Tell me, by what strange prodigy thou hast allowed Lusignan to take thy seat?" Malek Adhel then entered into a full detail of his weaknesses and faults, and Saladin replied, "Several witnesses of thy conduct and victims of thy imprudence have already

given me this account ; but they have represented thee less guilty. Mahomed and Kaled, who are here, while they deplored thy errors, did not think them unpardonable."—"Mahomed and Kaled here !" exclaimed the Prince, his countenance brightening up at this intelligence ; "then they are living and free ! Blessed be the angel who has set them at liberty !" "We have suffered much, Prince," said the two Mussulmen. Lusignan excepted, all the Christians have shown themselves humane and generous. With respect to ourselves, though the hand which broke our chains has concealed itself in the shade, we have been assured that we are indebted for our release to the Princess of England's entreaties." Malek Adhel looked down ; he wished, in order to expiate his wrongs, to hinder his heart, as it were, from being moved at the sound of her name. Saladin looked at him, and said, "What are thy resolves and what restitution canst thou offer thy country ?" Malek Adhel answered, "Call together the chiefs of the army. Mahomed will lay before them the statement of my errors and misfortunes. Hear thy judgment, Saladin, and pronounce my sentence."

The Sultan gave his assent : he mounted his throne, and the emirs and chiefs of the army took their seats around him. Malek Adhel refused to sit down, and, even in his humble deportment, displayed a consciousness of dignity which calamity had not impaired. Meanwhile, Mahomed began his statement, mentioned the two assaults and the two subsequent victories, detailed the artifice employed by the impostor whom Lusignan had sent, and the departure of Malek Adhel. He next proceeded to relate the capture of Cesarea, and the deep distress of the people at the absence of their great chief, stated the manner in which he had been deceived by Lusignan, how that monarch's artifice had hindered him from adhering to his resolution of burying himself under the ruins of Cesarea rather than surrender, and his cruel imprisonment immediately after delivering up the keys. "Alas !" continued Mahomed,

addressing the Prince, "the weight of my chains were soon increased by new calamities. I found that Lusignan, certain that you must return to Cesarea, had not wished to expose the lives of his soldiers by attacking you openly; that, to deceive you, he had caused fires to be lighted up in the camp he had left; that on the walls our flags were still displayed, and his soldiers clad in Saracen armour. His arts proved successful; you came and surrendered yourself! I know not, however, if he have fulfilled a part of his engagement, or whether you are indebted to him for liberty."

Saladin now arose, and silence prevailed. "Whomsoever thou owest thy liberty to," said the Sultan, "matters not: the obligations which bind thee to thy country are no less sacred. Speak, Malek Adhel, and make me acquainted with thy intentions." "Hear!" replied his brother: "since that fatal night when I saw my hands loaded with chains, the Princess of England in Lusignan's power, Cesarea reduced, my glory stained, and my brother betrayed, I would have inflicted death on myself, had not the hope of avenging thee left me a greater duty to fulfil." "Thus," replied the Sultan, "shall the hero triumph over a disgraceful passion, mount again the high seat he ought not to have descended from, and once more lead my armies to victory! Emirs, soldiers, people, all who are present, if a single voice condemn my brother, or dissent from his resuming the command, I swear to silence friendship and listen only to the voice of justice." The assembly answered the Sultan with general acclamations, tears of emotion trickled down their manly cheeks, and these words resounded from all sides, "Long live the great Saracen Malek Adhel, our Sultan's noble brother! As long as victory attend him, as long as friendship unite him with Saladin, and he remain the object of our love, he shall march at our head always and every where!"

Malek Adhel could not suppress his emotion; he rushed into the arms of his brother. "Ah!" said

he, "I feel how sweet it is to be thus loved, and am sensible of it at the moment when such affecting testimonies of esteem must separate me for ever from her who was the object of my fondest hopes." He ceased, and bid Matilda, from his inmost soul, an eternal farewell; then, raising his noble forehead, on which the flame of glory was beginning to kindle, he exclaimed, "Brother, and you my generous countrymen, at the moment when I had just betrayed you, that you trust yourselves again to my fidelity!—Behold, I cheerfully accept this mark of confidence, for now am I worthy of it—the sacrifice I have just made in my heart is the pledge."

The brothers retired, and concerted together the plan of a battle, certain that the Christians, in the intoxication of success, would not refuse it. It was to be terrible and decisive. A few days yet, and the fate of a battle was to tell the world which of the two empires was to be overthrown, and whether the standard of the Prophet or the banner of the Cross was to wave in the East.

CHAPTER LII.

FAME spread her wings, and flew before William. She reached Cesarea, and announced the Saracen's deliverance, but not the hand to which, he was indebted for it; that secret yet remained hidden in the bosom of charity. Immediately that Lusignan heard the intelligence, he divined the whole mystery. He guessed the man who had scorned his commands, and, invested with a power superior to that of kings, had been able to prevail over his own; but he well knew, at the same time, that such a man, acting only for the cause of heaven, disdained to reap on earth the fruit of his works, and would see it gathered by another, without even laying claim to it himself. The audacious Lusignan therefore ventured to attribute to his own generosity the prelate's merits, and caused it to be spread throughout the army, that, as a sovereign, his prudence had not allowed him to restore Malek Adhel his liberty, but that, as a knight, his magnanimity had indulged the Archbishop in setting him free secretly.

In the mean time, the Archbishop arrived, heard the reports, and waited on Lusignan, who, arrogant and proud until this instant, at the sight of William felt alarmed and humiliated. He acknowledged that an unconquerable passion had led him into great errors, and endeavoured to prove that, for the interests of the faith, the faults of the meanest Christian ought to be concealed; consequently those of the head of the army claimed a greater indulgence: in short, he employed all his eloquence to persuade the Prelate that he was himself interested in propagating among the troops a belief that it was to the sovereign alone who commanded them that Malek Adhel was indebted for liberty.—Here the Archbishop interrupted him. "Enough, Lusignan," said

he; "no more of this. I may be the advocate of sinners, but I will never be that of the sin. Alas, what a path have you chosen, O King of Jerusalem, to recover again your throne—artifice and treason! Mark me, Lusignan; I will keep a watchful eye over all your steps; and, while I revere the blood whence you sprang, and the purple whereon you sit, I shall hold the power to crush your greatness if you do wrong, and show the man as he is, if the man will be criminal."

Lusignan concealed the violent mortification which he felt at this galling declaration; and, feigning contrition, he ruminated upon the means of removing the just and troublesome witness who had threatened to haunt and confound him. With deep disappointment he saw the Archbishop enter Matilda's apartment, and converse with the Princess, apprehensive lest the secret should escape, and his untimely conduct be divulged.

Richard soon heard in the plains of Ascalon that the Saracen had returned to his brother, that he had resumed the command, and that the enemy were preparing for battle. He instantly wrote to Lusignan to join him with all his forces: he expressed great satisfaction at his conduct, and added, that Matilda could not return into a monastery whence the Saracens might snatch her away a second time, nor remain in a city which Malek Adhel had sworn to recover. Lusignan was ordered to bring her to the camp at Ascalon, that she might be surrounded by the protection of all the christian powers.

Lusignan made Richard's commands known to the army and the Princess. The army obeyed cheerfully; Matilda, resigned to whatever might be her fate, sat off, the Archbishop unremittingly attending her.

Richard received his brother in arms with strong testimonies of affection. He did not in the least suspect that he was not the real deliverer of Malek Adhel, and he took pride at last in being able to boast of his friend's virtues as well as of his valour; in this

manner he expressed himself before his sister. Lusignan coloured, Matilda said nothing. She had determined in herself not to reveal the truths she knew, and her lips could not consent to declare that Lusignan had intended to deprive his defenceless rival of life. With a cold and distant countenance, she attended to Richard's discourse. In vain did he hope to interest her, and yet less to excite her fear, for she, who had known every calamity, and resigned all happy expectations, could not be easily alarmed at any contingency.

Having learned from the Archbishop of Tyre that Malek Adhel was released, that his soul was filled with the ideas of conversion, and that, in their last conversation, he had permitted her to devote herself to the service of heaven, nothing detained her any longer on earth, and she only aspired to quit it. She declared her intention to Richard, who had derived fresh hopes from the new splendour of Lusignan. He grew angry, while she respectfully cast down her eyes, but without emotion. Astonished at her calmness, he peremptorily demanded if she were no longer afraid of his displeasure. "For you only, sire, do I fear its effects," replied she; "for myself I fear nothing: my fate is fixed: death only can change it, and death has no terrors for me."—Richard was awed with a fortitude that concealed itself under so much serenity; he began to feel himself overcome by a superior ascendancy, and, on observing the profound resignation depicted on Matilda's features, he was induced to believe that the soul which animated that beautiful countenance had already taken its flight towards another world, and that the tender virgin refused to be a queen on earth, only because she felt herself destined to be a saint in heaven.

Two days only had elapsed since the army had joined, and Richard reassumed the chief command, when they were informed the Saracens were marching their battalions out of Ascalon. They perceived the signal of battle, and all prepared for action. The

knights put on their thickest armour; Matilda, with trembling hands, fastened on her brother's cuirass. It was, perhaps, the last service she might have the opportunity of paying him, and she yet found tears for this apprehension, after having shed so many for fears of a more tender and poignant nature.

The King of Jerusalem, alone in his tent with his trusty squire, confided to him his secret grief. This squire, who, formerly a Mussulman, had been led away by a base capidity rather than a real faith, for many years had attached himself to Lusignan's service: he was ready to perform whatever his master should command, were it even a crime: and such was now the purpose which Lusignan meditated. "Hear!" said he: "On this important day I build but one hope; in this great battle, I have but one object to accomplish—it is to fight the Saracen Adhel! I am willing to fall by his hand, but the thought that he should survive me is a torture worse than death!—In our combat, be thou always at my side; if I go apart with him, do thou follow. Should I obtain the victory, remain quiet:—if I fall, and perish, I rely on thy fidelity to——. Swear, therefore, thou wilt not suffer my enemy to outlive his triumph!" The squire solemnly pledged his word, and Lusignan, no longer fearing the issue of an engagement where he had death only to encounter, became serene.

It was on Wednesday, the 4th of October, 1192, that the whole army of the Crusaders left the camp of Ascalon to meet Saladin.* It spread itself in the plain between the river Belus and the sea. The King of England, before whom they carried the books of the Gospels, covered with a rich silk drapery, the four corners of which were supported by four officers, occupied the left near the river, at the head of the English and the Monastic Knights of Hospitality. The Marquis of Montferrat commanded the right, having the Venetians and the Lombards under him.

* The disposition of this battle is wholly historical, and the words which terminated it were spoken by *Richard* under that circumstance.

Lusignan was in the centre, with the Landgrave of Thuringia, the French, and the troops of Pisa. Gerard of Biderford, the Grand Master of the Templars, the Duke of Guelders, and the Catalonians, formed the body of reserve. The guard of the camp was entrusted to Geoffrey of Lusignan, brother of the King, and James d'Avènes. The Archbishops of Pisa, Canterbury, Ravenna, Besancon, and Nazareth; the bishops of Beauvais, Salisbury, Ptolemais, and Bethlehem, covered with a helmet, were also fighting. Richard, admiring the force and discipline of this great army, enthusiastically exclaimed, "What power on earth can resist us! Remain thou neutral, O Lord, and victory is ours!"

The two armies advanced with equal ardour;—they came in presence of each other—quickly did the space that separated the combatants diminish—and now they closed. The visors were pulled down, the lances presented, the steeds impatient.—Christians, Mussulmen, all rushed forward, shield to shield, sword to sword, foot to foot, pike to pike! The two armies were so closely engaged, that it became impossible to distinguish the Saracens from the Crusaders, and the feathers of the one seemed fixed on the helmets of the other party. From amidst the tumultuous shock arose a cloud of dust which covered the combatants, darkened and ascended the sky, and the peaceful hills resounded with the din of arms, the cries of victory, and the shrieks of death.

Lusignan's sword mowed down the Infidels and made dreadful carnage; nothing could resist or escape his fury, for as yet he had not encountered Malek Adhel.—While he triumphed in the centre, Richard also triumphed on the left; but, on the right the Marquis of Montferrat had been repulsed by Saladin. Victorious, however, on two points, the Christians had the advantage, and were following up their success with incredible rapidity, when dreadful outcries, proceeding from the rear of their army, suddenly arrested their progress, made them

turn round, and announced the appearance of Malek Adhel! They returned instantly, and every where found the marks of this formidable warrior's progress—broken helmets, coats of arms rent open and drenched in gore, stands of colours rolled into the dust, the deep and gaping wounds of the dying—all told them that Malek Adhel's sword had passed that way. They soon perceived him galloping over the field of battle, carrying his desperate valour wherever the Christians were victors.

The action recommenced on all sides : the Saracen triumphed every where, and, from the skill and promptitude of his plans, the Christians found themselves surrounded and hemmed in by the enemy. Lusignan, desperate, and raving to see such a noble victory on the point of being wrested from his brow, devoted himself for the good of the cause. He called aloud on his invincible rival, hoping, by removing him from the scene of action, to give the Christians time to recover their advantage. The hero heard the challenge ; he groaned with rage, but made no reply. The King of Jerusalem surprised at his silence, spurred on his courser, and came up with Malek Adhel, who turned aside, and avoided the only Christian whose blood he would have spilt with pleasure. He had solemnly determined within himself to avoid every private quarrel, in order not to abandon the field of battle before victory, and at any price he wished to remain true to this duty. Too careless to defend a hateful life while repelling the Christians, he did not wholly escape their hostile weapons.—Meanwhile, Lusignan, obstinate in the pursuit, and always close to his person, loaded him with the most opprobrious epithets. The fierce warrior for a long time received his insults in silence, till, at length, unable to repress his rage, and confident that an instant would suffice to cleanse the earth of his hated rival, he exclaimed, "Come on! Let us at once extinguish in our blood the mutual hatred that gnaws our hearts!"—The King of Jeru-

salem followed him, but not alone : his squire was faithful to his treacherous orders.

Malek Adhel halted at some distance from the army, behind a pile of rocks that effectually concealed them from observation. He threw away his shield, exclaiming, "Lusignan, let us reject these vain means of defence, which may delay our defeat, and hasten that instant when we shall cease to hate each other." Lusignan consented, threw away his shield, drew his sword, and the combat commenced. Grim Death heard the blows of these intrepid warriors, flew in haste to the spot, and smiled as he beheld the great victims on the point of falling under his empire. Never had Lusignan before displayed so much valour, never had he entertained so much hope, for Malek Adhel had been previously wounded. Many Christians on the field of battle were indebted to the indifference the hero displayed in defending his life, for the honour of having shed his blood—a loss which tended to unnerve the vigour of his arm ; but his intrepidity supplied the deficiency of strength. Grasping his sword with both his hands, he discharged such a furious blow on the head of his rival, that he staggered, his helmet split, part of it fell on the ground, and his eyes were soon covered with a stream of blood. Malek Adhel, seeing his head bare, threw away his helmet, and waited till his adversary was in a capacity to renew the fight ; but, scarcely had Lusignan recovered his senses, when he suddenly turned upon the Prince, and plunged his sword into that part where the hero's cuirass joined. His blood issued foaming from the wound.—The Prince, in turn, recovered his superiority, and pierced the side of his rival.—Lusignan now avoided the Prince, changed his ground, wearied and exhausted him ; but the Saracen, indignant at his protraction of the struggle, threw away his sword, drew his poniard, and rushed on Lusignan, to bury it in his heart. They closed, wrestled, and shook each other off ; at length the Prince suddenly grasped his foe, lifted him up, and hurled him to the earth. The victor raised his dag-

ger to strike. "O hero, hear me!" said Lusignan in a dying voice. Malek Adhel held the poniard suspended, but the King of Jerusalem concluded not his prayer—his intellects had forsaken him! The Prince hesitated to strike his lost fallen enemy; and was contemplating him with mingled sensations of scorn and pity, when Lusignan's squire, who had seen the combat, and thought his master was expiring, ignobly rushed upon the hero, and plunged his sword deep into his throat. Malek Adhel turned to attack the assassin; but, fainting, exhausted by numerous wounds, he reeled, he sank down—his eyes closed to the light, his livid dying lips for the last time breathed the name of Matilda; warmth and motion retired, and he bit the dust imbrued with his blood.

Lusignan's squire, appalled at his horrid villany with the assistance of a shepherd, who was tending his goats among the rocks, essayed to remove his master to the camp. On the road they met some fugitive Christians, to whom the squire told the incredible event, that Malek Adhel had fallen by the sword of Lusignan, who was desperately wounded!

The Christians soon returned, repeating to every one, "Malek Adhel is no more!" From tongue to tongue it reached the ear of the armies, and for a moment Christians and Mussulmen suspended the work of slaughter. Again the carnage recommenced, and Saladin, till this period victorious and collected in the most imminent peril, gave a loose to despair, and forgot his glory and empire in his loss. He was repulsed, defeated, retired to Ascalon, and went to hide in its walls his broken heart and the remains of his numerous army.

CHAPTER LIII.

WHILE the Christians, masters of the field, were singing the hymn of victory, Lusignan's body arrived in the camp. The European surgeon, with the benevolent Matilda and the Archbishop, immediately attended; but, as soon as the squire had announced that Lusignan and Malek Adhel had fallen by each other's dagger, the virgin let fall the balms she was administering, her eyes lost their lustre, and she stood aghast, as if deprived of sense and motion. "Are there no hopes of Malek Adhel being saved?" demanded the Archbishop, as he supported Matilda. "Lost for ever!—for ever and ever!" exclaimed the maiden, with a heart-rending voice and a look that seemed to dive into the depth of eternity.

The Prelate repeated his question, and, demanding if the great Malek had fallen in fair combat, the squire, struck at the view of the Princess, and feeling the culture of conscience tearing his heart, stood speechless. The penetrating William at once apprehended some horrid mystery, and summoned the culprit into a retired tent, whither he had the Princess removed. Scarcely had they entered, when the assassin threw himself at the feet of the Archbishop. "Pardon, pardon!" he exclaimed. "You have deceived us, then?" said the Prelate: "Malek Adhel is yet alive." Matilda revived at these words, and eagerly entreated the squire to confirm it. "Wretch that I am!" he ejaculated, "O! that at the price of my blood I could restore the Prince to life!" "Thou art the murderer!" said the Princess; and, as the guilty man fell prostrate to the ground, and confessed the dark deed, Matilda sank into the arms of the Archbishop. When his tender cares had somewhat revived and consoled the Princess, he suggested that there might yet be a spark of life remaining. "Then

let us fly, my Father!" said Matilda: "the assassin will guide us over the sanguinary traces."

Night was no obstacle: the moon lighted them on their way, and soon the mass of rocks appeared which shaded the body of the noble Saracen. The murderer shuddered; he could proceed no farther; he turned aside, from that blood which was rising against him; his limbs stiffened, and his tongue refused its office. Matilda looked round, and was struck with the light which the rays of the moon reflected on a warrior's armour. She ran forward, threw herself on her knees before the body of the Saracen, moved his hair aside, knew him, bent over that face disfigured with blood and dust, laid a trembling hand on his heart, and warmed with her pure breath those pallid and frozen lips death was about to close for ever!—a feeble sigh issued from the hero's breast. "O my Saviour!" exclaimed Matilda, with exalted fervour, "not for love do I implore thee; I ask nothing for myself—fill up his heart alone; let him behold the light again, only that he may know thee; and that thou mayest become the only object of his thoughts."

While she prayed, the Archbishop applied to the Prince's gaping wound a dressing, which he but too well perceived would prove useless. He then proceeded to discharge a more important office;—he heard the murmur of a fountain at the foot of a rock, and ran to fill the blood-stained helmet with its cooling waters. "O venerable saint," said the Princess to him, "pray that the Lord will not deny you the salvation of his soul." The Prelate bathed the hero's forehead with that water to which heaven's mercy had allowed him to communicate a divine property—that instant the rays of the moon fell directly on the face of Malek Adhel. Matilda saw his eyes half-open, and his lips trying to articulate some words. "My Father," said she, "approach, speak to him—it is not me he ought to hear." William drew near the Prince: "My son," said he to him, "my son, God expects you—hear his voice." At this sound Malek

Adhel opened his eyes again, and feebly said, "My Father, you are returned then—you have not forsaken your son." With passionate vehemence the virgin exclaimed—"Blessed be the Almighty!" "What voice is that?" said Adhel, endeavouring to raise himself a little, "what voice comes to make my death joyful?" "My son," replied the pious William, "give to other thoughts the few moments you have to remain on earth for they may purchase eternal life and boundless felicity." "With her, my father?" said he, pressing faintly the hand of Matilda. "Yes, with her, my son," replied the Prelate, "provided your last sentiments be addressed to God." He then hastened to shed the holy water of baptism on the Prince; he pronounced the sacred words, and making him embrace the holy sign of redemption. "Adore," said he, "the rays of that sun which was extinguished on the cross to enlighten you." At these words the Prince quitted Matilda's hand to embrace the cross. The divine light, and abundant life that follows it, at once descended in torrents into his soul.—He loved and believed!—"Celestial lights," said he, "I have seen you—I can lose you no more—Faith, love, hope, ye are mine! Matilda, receive my farewell embrace; I am going to wait for thee!" The virgin bathed with tears the face of her husband; but they were tears of happiness, since she was certain of meeting him again; and when a whole eternity of beatitude was before her, death, which was about to separate them, seemed but a few days' absence. "Friend," exclaimed she, in a sort of extatic delight, "be thou first happy! I love thee too well to complain." The Archbishop joined their hands, and, in a solemn and affectionate voice, said, "Christian pair, be for ever united!—thou Malek Adhel, go and receive the reward of thy baptism: ascend to heaven, and prepare the felicity of thy wife; while her tears shall expiate thy errors here." The hero had just strength enough left to raise his eyes up to that heaven the Prelate was pointing at; he shut them again instantly, and his soul took its flight into the bosom of that God who had

just converted and redeemed it.—Matilda contemplated with a silent grief that pale and noble hand that was now reclined on the earth for ever." "Daughter," said William, "we must restore these mortal remains to the earth that claims them."—"No," exclaimed she, "I will never part from them. O my husband, I swear never to quit thee! Have they not separated us sufficiently during thy life? I will follow thee every where. I alone will lay the funeral pall on this thy discoloured brow. Unfortunate! have I not done it once already?" She could say no more; too many sobs oppressed and choked her; and, letting her head drop on that breast which had for ever ceased to palpitate, she seemed to partake of its death.

William felt himself too much affected to bear the sight any longer. Compassion was the only sentiment that yet attached him to the earth, and often had the calamities of others broken his courage. He turned aside, walked off, supported himself on the trunk of an old palm-tree, while he indulged in the anguish of his soul.

Having reached her zenith, the moon lighted the gloomy and solemn scene; her rays darted equally on the murderer who was biting the dust, exhaling the cries of remorse not far from his lifeless victim; on the angelic beauty, the hope and pride of the world—of that world she was going to quit, to lay down her hopes and love in a tomb; and, through the long leaves of the palm-tree, her glimmering rays fell also on that venerable man, grown old in charity, equally dear to God and to the unfortunate, who enjoyed no comforts but what he imparted himself; knew no pains but those he saw others labouring under; and who, by his long practice of doing good, was daily adding fresh acts of kindness to the number, without once thinking of the recompense that awaited him.

Amidst that profound and mournful silence, that was interrupted only by the groans of remorse, the sobs of grief, and the exclamations of piety, the neigh-

ing of horses was heard. Soon men appeared, and the Prelate recognised the Saracen habit; he shuddered for Matilda, and ran hastily towards her; but the Infidels perceived, and stopped him. "Christian," said they, "what dost thou here? is it thou who hast deprived Malek Adhel of life?"—"I think, on the contrary, I have given him life," replied the Archbishop, calmly. The Princess, hearing some noise, arose, started, and placing herself before the corpse of her husband, "Men, approach not," exclaimed she; "you shall not take him from me." One of the Saracens now left the troop, ran forward, and said, "I know her; it is the Princess of England—my master must be here."—"I will not give him up to thee, Kaled," replied Matilda, with a mixture of terror and madness; "thou wert his friend once, but it matters not; thou shalt not have him!" Kaled perceived the hero's body, and fell prostrate on the ground. "O my master!" exclaimed he, striking his head, "O my master! was I doomed to see thee thus again?"—"Kaled," interrupted the Princess, "thy master died my husband—I will die by his side." He replied, "We came hither at the risk of our lives to seek these precious remains, and take them back to Saladin. They belong to him."—"They belong to me alone!" said Matilda; "and if thou take away my husband, I will follow thee, Kaled, to the end of the world. I will call after thee, and never cease demanding my lord."

The Mussulmen then constructed a litter, and thereon, weeping, laid the remains of the noble Saracen. The Princess walked by their side in silence, and with her veil down; the Archbishop followed the train at a distance, repeating in a low voice, and with regular pauses, some pathetic verses out of the hymns of death.

The funeral procession reached the walls of Ascalon with the dawn; the gates were thrown open, the people ran, and, weeping, followed it along the streets, leading to the palace. On all sides praises and lamentations were heard:—the soldiers seemed chiefly

afflicted—they deposited, at the entrance of the palace, the corpse of the hero they adored, and prostrated themselves all around, striking their heads on the earth. “O magnanimous Prince!” exclaimed they, “thy memory and thy generosity are engraven on our hearts; the heavens have lost their light; the world its fairest ornament; the empire its defender; and Saladin his only friend!”

Meanwhile, the procession advanced into the great hall of the palace, where the Sultan received it, his head covered with ashes, and unable to suppress the violence of his grief. “O my brother!” said he, embracing the inanimate corpse, “my brother—my only friend! is it thou? How shall I bear the weight of my empire without thee!”—The virgin drew her veil back, and her hair flowing loose, her garments torn, the majesty of sorrow imprinted on her brow, she threw herself at the feet of the Sultan, and exclaimed, “O powerful monarch! of all the blessings I was destined to possess on earth, this corpse alone remains; take it not from me, I entreat thee!”—“What dost thou ask?” interrupted Saladin, much affected. “I ask thee for my husband!” replied she: “before he died, he embraced my faith; before he died, he received my plighted oaths, and has taken them away with him. Ah! permit me to pass by his side the few remaining days of my sad life. Give me of Malek Adhel all that remains of Malek Adhel on earth. Noble Saladin; lend an ear to the entreaties of a desolate wife!” “And art thou really the wife of my brother?” inquired the Sultan, raising her up with kindness. The Archbishop then came forward, and said, “Malek Adhel died a Christian—he died the husband of Matilda!” “I know thy lips never uttered a falsehood, Prelate,” said the Sultan, “and had any other person told me these words, I should have refused to believe them—Malek Adhel died a Christian!—O ill-fated beauty!—thou who didst deprive me of my brother during his life, who hast caused his untimely death, and still takest him away from me now he is no more, keep thy husband, since his

last wish was thine !" "And now," said she, putting down her veil over her face, "I have nothing more to ask of the world, and I go to bid it an eternal farewell."

"Widow of Malek Adhel," demanded the Sultan, "in what place dost thou choose to deposit his sacred remains?"—"They shall follow me," replied she, "to the monastery of Mount Carmel—to that eternal retreat where I am going to seclude myself from all. Happier than I ever hoped to be, I shall live near my husband." "Noble Sultan," said the Prelate, "grant the Christians some days' truce, in order that they may perform this funeral with suitable pomp."

Saladin assented. The Archbishop departed, to announce to the Christians all their losses, and for what they had to prepare. Until his return, he left Matilda in the palace of her husband's brother; there a vast apartment, hung with black, was prepared for her, and night and day, at the side of Malek Adhel's coffin, she incessantly exclaimed with tears, "Peace, peace to thy ashes, my husband! and, if it be possible, peace, peace also to my own soul!—O my soul, why art thou oppressed with such a weight of sorrow, and why dost thou remain plunged in discouragement? He whom thou weep-est has ceased to weep; and, whilst thy weakness keeps invoking him back to this earth, he partakes of unspeakable joys amidst that supreme felicity to which the Most High had predestined him in his divine mercy!"

CHAPTER LIV.

THE great battle of Ascalon had only given a victory to the Christians—no joy had attended it ; and as the Prelate entered their tents, he was surprised to find the silence of consternation instead of the acclamations of triumph. Certain words, that had dropped from the squire, had raised suspicions on the King of Jerusalem's conduct, and on the manner in which Malek Adhel had been attacked. Richard alone refused to admit them : the other chiefs, not blinded by the same partiality, perceived but too well the proofs that confirmed the accusation, and humbled with the disgrace so detestable an act would throw on their names and exploits, they thought with horror only on the noise their victory would make in the world, because it must resound together with the reports of a crime.

There were, besides, among the Crusaders, such magnanimous minds and such noble knights, that Malek Adhel could not fail having many admirers and friends. They wished to weep his death, and yet dared not. Religion might perhaps have taken offence at public demonstrations of grief ; but while they concealed it, their countenances declared it, and those whose sorrow was less poignant, still could not help being hurt at the fate of the great Saracen. That formidable enemy of the faith had fallen indeed, and the faith ought to have rejoiced—but men's pride deplored the loss of one whose great virtues had raised man's dignity so high ; and, seeing him follow Montmorency into the grave, both Mussulmen and Christians thought that the world, henceforth bereft of heroes, no longer deserved they should try to distinguish themselves by exploits which the esteem of those two great men could no more repay.

The Archbishop's return broke upon the mournful silence that reigned in the camp. On hearing Malek Adhel had died a Christian, all their suppressed griefs broke out aloud. Weeping the loss of a Christian, it was no longer tears which they contented themselves to shed, but deep sighs and incessant moanings were heard on all sides.

Universal were the lamentations that were heard throughout the camp. Lusignan's name was only mentioned with horror. The Prelate heard their cries, and did not attempt to stop them. Richard, astonished, drew him aside, and said, "My Father, Lusignan is charged with a crime of the blackest die, and you remain silent! If your charity have not taken up his defence—you think him guilty then? O my Father, can it be possible that Lusignan, my friend"—"Name him not your friend," interrupted the Archbishop; "he does not deserve the name." "What!" exclaimed Richard, struck with horror, "Lusignan an assassin!"—"Malek Adhel died assassinated!" answered the apostle of Christ, deeply dejected, "and Lusignan commanded the blow!" The King of England, on hearing this, changed countenance, and fell back in his chair. "Unheard-of atrocity!" exclaimed he: "he whom I called my brother, whom I pressed to my heart, has he betrayed the laws of honour, and does he still exist?"—"Yes," replied the Archbishop; "he still lives for his greater torture, for he hoped not to outlive his crime, and to precede his rival into the grave." He then explained what had been Lusignan's orders, and his charity industriously sought after reasons to hold him less criminal; but inflexible honour would not allow it, and Richard was on the point of growing indignant at the Prelate's indulgence. "Father," exclaimed he, "no pardon, no pardon! the murderer deserves none. Haunted every where by divine vengeance, he ought to be haunted by men too—and we owe no mercy to crimes for which I hope heaven will have none!—I break, I abjure for ever, all connection with Lusignan!—I will proclaim my hatred

as loudly as I formerly declared my friendship ; for Richard cannot bear that men should suppose he entertains one spark of compassion towards an assassin." He said, and ran through the camp, exhaling the bitterness of his indignant soul ; all the Christians shared it—not one could be found who excused Lusignan ; not one but condemned him. These clamours spread at once from one end of the camp to the other, and Lusignan was only to wake to hear them. His loss of blood had deprived him as yet of motion, but the surgeons had answered for his life ; he was to live then, and the earth was drenched with the blood of innocence—he was to live, and Malek Adhel was no more !—but the last, at peace with heaven, had already received the immortal crown, and Lusignan was to open his eyes to the light only to hear his crime—to find it was known to the whole world—to feel shame and remorse, and lose all at once Matilda, his honour, Richard's friendship, the throne of Jerusalem, and the esteem of the universe ! He was returning to life only to be punished, and perhaps to repent, for it does not belong to man to set bounds to heaven's mercy.

Meanwhile, funeral bells tolled in Cesarea ; Ptolemais sounded also the knell of death, and Conrad commanded his proud Tyre to pay the same homage to the hero. All was grief and mourning along the christian shores, all was grief and mourning along Saladin's coasts ; and the two worlds, for a time were deploring together the same calamity.

Not far from Ascalon, at the entrance of a road that went straight to Mount Carmel, the Christians came to wait for the precious remains Saladin had promised to give them. There they erected a cross and under its sacred shade prepared to receive the ashes of Malek Adhel.

Soon from the gates of Ascalon the funeral procession appeared. Two cars, hung with black, rolled slowly on the sands ; the first contained all that remained of the greatest man on earth, now the Almighty had withdrawn his breath : in the second,

a voluntary victim, as dead to the world as to the husband she followed, was going to end her worldly career that day; and the two cars, advancing towards the same grave, equally silent, covered up and concealed from the eyes of men, would not allow them to know in which the lamentations of wo were expressed.

Saladin, on foot, his countenance pale and stern, and his clothes torn, advanced towards the Christians, and said, "I give you back him who gave himself to you; but I demand his murderer in return."—Richard, speaking in the name of all the Christians, answered, "We hold in equal abhorrence the assassin of thy brother and of our brother; but it belongs to God alone to lay his hands on the heads of kings—These great powers acknowledge that high tribunal alone.—Meanwhile, calm thy fears; the crime shall be punished, and the blood of the just shall not go unrevenged; for Lusignan, abhorred by men, abandoned by his own people, will be more keenly agonized than if he were deprived of life; he will live disgraced."—"Similar to the wicked spirit that sprang from man," added the Archbishop; "wondering about barren places, seeking for rest, and finding none." After a short pause, the Sultan replied, "If it be so, I am satisfied." He afterwards added, with a deep and hollow groan, pointing to one of the cars, "There he is! take him, since it is among your dead that he has chosen his abode." He said, and his great soul, almost overcome by grief, rose again with fortitude. He made a sign to his people to surrender Malek Adhel's car to the Christians; the Saracens could not support the trying scene; they threw themselves on the wheels, rolled down in the dust, and embraced the cold remains of the hero with lamentable shrieks; but Saladin made a second sign, and he was obeyed. The Mussulmen fell back, and the car remaining without attendants, the Christians approached and surrounded it: they deposited the coffin at the foot of that cross which had conquered the hero, and the

priests celebrated that great victory in singing the hymns of death.

This duty over, the two cars, guided by the Christians, were on the point of advancing again towards their last abode, when the Archbishop of Tyre, coming forward, said to Saladin, "Wilt thou not come and witness the honours which these kings and the people are going to pay thy brother?"—"No!" replied the Sultan; "I cannot assist at your ceremonies, my faith is elsewhere; but such of my subjects as may wish to see them have my leave to go.—They will come back and inform me whether your pomps were suitable to the greatest conquest you ever obtained over me!"

Having spoken thus, he retired. Some Mussulmen followed him, but the far greater number wished to witness the sepulture of their Prince. They intermixed with the Christians; they heard their funeral dirge, and the air resounded with their lamentations: from all parts the people ran, and raised their voices; the sacred prayers ascended to heaven, and these loud effusions of the church, echoed from hill to hill, reached the ear of Saladin, and struck him with the last sounds by which that holy mother consecrates the everlasting happiness of her children.

The Archbishop of Tyre alone ventured to raise the funeral veil that hid the spotless virgin who was going to devote herself; no other than he beheld that august and resigned grief, nor heard the accents of her pious lips, which uttered no other murmur or complaint than these words: "My soul is sad even unto death; watch and pray with me."—"O daughter of Christ," answered the Prelate, interrupted by his tears, "repeat also those words of your divine master—"In the world you will meet with affliction; but take courage; I have conquered the world."

When the procession had reached the summit of Mount Carmel—of that revered spot, where the greatest of prophets, raised up in a flaming car, was carried into the bosom of angels, and passed from life to eternity without having known the darkness of

death, the kings, holding tapers in their hands, their head and feet bare, respectfully entered the sacred enclosure. The Christians followed them; the Mussulmeah were forbidden, and remained behind.—The Archbishop of Tyre saw it, and wept over them; he remembered that formerly in the desert, “Jesus, having perceived a great multitude round him, was moved with compassion, as they appeared like sheep who had no pastor. “Oh!” exclaimed he with transport, “all flesh shall this day behold the salvation of God.” But it was objected, that it was a profanation for Infidels to tread on holy ground. The Prelate answered, in a tone of vehemence and inspiration, pointing to the hero’s coffin, “A great miracle has taken place, and God has visited his people; suffer it therefore to be complete; for he who is powerful enough to raise up children to Abraham out of these stones, may well call these men to him.” He said; hope, charity, and faith, spoke within him, and the Mussulmen passed.

The sisters of Mount Carmel, previously informed by William, had adorned the humble simplicity of their church with all that pomp which kings of the world love to see around them. They knew that the hero who had profaned their retreat, converted by the Lord, was coming to take his rest among them, and to beg after his death the prayers of those whom he had offended during his life. Their souls, fed with that spirit of their heavenly master, of love and mercy, had already forgotten the insult, and only remembered it then to implore its forgiveness; and, thanks to their intercession, the ashes of Malek Adhel, on entering under the arches of the temple he had profaned, entered them at peace with God.

Meanwhile, except the Archbishop of Tyre, and the Bishops of Bethlehem and Ptolémaïs, no mortal eye had penetrated into the interior of the cloister, nor perceived the chaste garment of the holy virgin who inhabited it. Retired in the inmost parts of the sanctuary, the choir, where they alone had a right to enter, two thick curtains, hung up at some distance from each other, secluded them from the eyes of men.

Thus piety, anticipating, as it were, the nights of death, seemed from this miserable earth, where they yet resided, to have transported them into a better world, invisible, unknown to the rest of mankind, and which God alone inhabited with them.

The royal virgin, whom they had admitted into the interior courts of the monastery, had not yet acquired the right to sit by their side. Concealed, however, they assigned her a place in the space between the two curtains, which divided their sanctuary from men, and on the limit, as it were, which parted them from the world.

The vaulted roof of the temple was dimly lighted by the funeral tapers ; branches of pine and cypress were strewed on the pavement ; on every column some inscription bore a memento of death.—Marble images conveyed the expressions of grief, and from the hearts of all present loud lamentations and deep sobs were heard. Amidst all these insignia of death and mourning, the shrine alone retained its wonted splendour and magnificence, as if to tell men it did not partake of their infirmities. There dwelt the majesty of God : it dazzled with the rays of the sacred sun all around, and the angels, holding the censer, scattered about the perfume of saints.

The Kings surrounded the evangelical chair which the Prelate had just ascended. Bérengère, the disconsolate Bérengère, dressed in black, prostrate before a distant altar, holding her little infant in her arms, prayed for the soul of her benefactor, and begged of the holy Queen of Virgins repose for her who was afflicted and destitute of consolation ; for her whose heart the storm had broken. The Christians, kneeling on the ground, and their eyes cast downwards, waited in holy devotion for the words and the presence of the Lord ; and farther on, near the entrance of the church, the Mussulmen were crowded together, wondering at what they saw, and asking where they were ; but they wondered much more when the Archbishop of Tyre commanding the first curtain to be raised, they perceived that tender virgin, the widow of Malek

Adhel, the daughter of kings, lying down on ashes near their master's corpse, and partly covered by the funeral pall; her golden hair no longer adorned her beauteous head, and her flaxen tresses, scattered around her neck, announced that the ceremony of her death to the world had already begun.

At the sight of her, all hearts felt broken, and floods of tears gushed from every eye.

The Archbishop of Tyre raised his hands, and in a majestic voice answered the general lamentations with these words: "The Almighty rules!—Earth be thou joyful!" He said, and the divine hopes, already descending from heaven with these words, rushed into all their souls, and began to banish worldly sorrows. The Archbishop then resumed with the Prophet, pointing to Malek Adhel's coffin, "I took thee by the hand to bring thee back from the extremities of the earth; I called thee to me from the most distant parts; I selected thee out; fear nothing, for now I am with thee!"

"Such," added he with great vehemence, "such was the fate of the Prince who some time since was groaning yet under the chains of Satan—and you weep! Such is the miracle the Almighty has performed for his people before the sight of his enemies, and you weep! Never, never did an act so great astonish Israel.—An impious Prince arose in the East, and threatened our faith. As a thunder-bolt, he devoured the faithful and their armies.—In vain did Europe vomit forth millions of soldiers; the arm of the invincible Saracen seemed ready to crush them all; a few days yet, and the Empire of Christ had been destroyed, and the gates of hell had prevailed. But God saw our misery, and took compassion on us; he chained down that arm which the whole world could not resist; he spoke, and the hero was his! This is what he has done, what you have seen, Christians, and you weep! And this virgin," continued he, pointing to Matilda, "why does she grieve? what comforts does she reproach the Lord with not having granted her? Did she wish to live without trials, and die without merit in the eyes

of her creator ? O virgin ! most happy virgin ! what destiny was ever fairer than thine ? In vain did men and their artifice, the world and its temptations, form a league against thee. Religion was stronger in thy support than they were in thy attack : hell itself has joined with them.—Shedding the poison of love in thy heart, it tried to drag thee down into its abyss by giving thee to an Infidel ; but, with the help of the Most High thou hast prevailed, and made, of the poisons prepared for thy destruction, seeds of salvation for the hero of thy love. And now, Matilda, why those tears, unless they be tears of gratitude to that God, who, during sixteen years peace and retirement, took delight in instructing thee in his law, in order to exalt thee to his glory ;—for that God, who, at the expiration of a year of trial and affliction—a term so short, that it is nothing in the eyes of men, and is already over for thee, brings thee out of all thy perils, and victorious over all the snares spread for thy ruin ;—for that God, who pleased with thy meekness and resignation to his commands, opens to thee the port, receives thee into his bosom, and long before the term of thy career, yet in the age of error, secures to thee the immortal palm that adorns the brow of the just.—O Matilda, what wouldst thou complain of ? Knowest thou not what awaits thee ? For the trials of a few days, the afflictions and miseries of a few hours, knowest thou not what the Lord hath promised to thee ? Listen, and from the arched roof of this temple, the bosom of this shrine, and the depth of these graves, hearest thou not all these voices exclaiming, “ Endless joy ! blissful eternity ! ”

The virgin raised her head, and, once more showing to the world that beauteous face it was no more to behold, she extended her hand towards her husband and said :

“ And for that hero’s conversion, what reward has God promised ? ”

At these words, the immortal army of saints descended among them ; the golden harps of the che-

rabim gave sounds, and the angels, resounding in every part of the church, repeated in concerts with the voices of men, "Endless joy! eternal bliss!"

Now, no longer a mortal creature, the virgin suddenly arose from amidst the shades of death wherein she was buried; her eyes were flaming, her face beamed with light, a sort of celestial joy sparkled all over her person, her mind had compassed infinite beatitude: beyond all the heavens, the husband she was weeping for had appeared to her lying in the bosom of the Lord, and now she wept no more, but in a voice loud with joy exclaimed:

"Glory! supreme glory! and everlasting felicity!"

She sank down again: the sublime vision had vanished, but the sentiment of it remained in her heart for ever! And now, world, offer thy pomps, joys, and loves, and even the happiness she had so long wished for, and she will not regret them. Thou art not rich enough to tempt her any more, and thy perishable comforts are tasteless, for God has given her a foretaste of those that awaited her, and which her sacrifices and virtues have deserved. At that supreme instant, the Majesty of the Most High was perceived in every part of the august temple:—yes, he was every where, even in the hearts of the Mussulmen. Never had their eyes beheld, nor their ears heard, what they had just seen and understood. The speech of the Prelate, the sparks of glory and happiness, darting from the eyes of the virgin, those celestial sounds in the air, those Christians who dared to call heaven down amongst them, and that divine charity which condescends to visit them—all struck, confounded, and subdued, the Infidels. Oppressed, astonished, and impelled by an invincible hand, they rushed through the Christians with loud acclamations, and, prostrating themselves round the Prelate's chair, they touched the ground with their foreheads, repeating, "Father! O Father! we believe!"

And now ask what is the happiness of the just?—

Look into the heart of William—into that heart, fired with charity, and beaming with the joy that proceeded from the love of God, in proportion with the numbers of those who partook of it. His face was covered with scalding tears: with a voice wherein he conveyed all the feelings of his soul, he exclaimed, taking a crucifix from his breast, and holding it up over his head, "This is he, mortals! Behold him, ye Christians!—he who descended on the earth to shake of the night of death, a day of triumph and rejoicing!"

The Mussulmen repeated, still striking the ground with their heads, "Father! O Father! we adore!"

They formed but one people, one heart. The Christians embraced their brethren, and knelt down, worshipping by their side.

"Awake, ashes of Malek Adhel, awake!" continued the Archbishop. "Noble hero, shake off the dust wherein thou sleepest. Arise, and assist at thy noblest victory. From the abode of death hast thou spoken to their hearts, for the voices that issue from graves are those that persuade the deepest. Father of thy people, thou hast opened heaven before them, and their salvation is the price of thy blood! O Christ! preserve by thy name those thou hast just given him, in order that they may form but one with him, and that where he is, there they may be also, to contemplate the glory thou hast destined for him!"

The Archbishop came down from the sacred pulpit, and blessed his new children; but, before he conferred the baptism on them, he proposed to consecrate the sacrifice of the virgin. The young beauty arose, put on the coarse garment of the sisters of Mount Carmel, pronounced with a firm voice the vow that secluded her from the world for ever; and then, extending her hand towards the proselytes who were Malek Adhel's subjects, "Farewell, my brethren," said she; "we shall meet him again!" She cast her eyes down with much emotion at the sight of Richard, of that king, that brother, she was to see no more, and wiped away some

tears as she passed before Bérèngère. Every eye was fixed on her. An object more of admiration than pity, in her all appeared as great and sublime as the religion and faith on which she supported herself. She fell back a few paces; she approached the last curtain, as William raised it, and exclaimed, "Behold a daughter of Elijah, who is preparing to ascend her Father's car!" He said;—the virgin stooped—she disappeared! and the world from which she had for ever vanished, struck with her last looks, and the divine accents which resounded behind the veil that concealed her, asked itself, whether it was not heaven which she had just entered, and whether that eternity promised to her had not commenced already!

CONCLUSION.

A YEAR elapsed, and during that period never had a murmur escaped the virgin's lips, nor risen in her heart. Prostrate before the shrine, she blessed the Lord that he had not allowed her destiny to conclude as she had so long wished it. "Alas!" said she, "what would have been my fate, if, united to Malek Adhel, I had seen him led away by his brother, wavering in the faith; always struggling between a new religion and an old friendship; a bad Christian or a bad brother, and unable to practise one virtue without sacrificing another! What temptations would have assailed us! By this time perhaps the victims of sin, we should have been expiating by eternal tears the pleasures of a day, instead of reaping the everlasting rewards of our exertions. My husband at this instant enjoys ineffable delights under the sacred porches; he looks at me; he smiles—expects, and calls me!—O Lord! we have but one thing to wish near thee!"

But that desire, which love had created, subsided with time, and the idea of Malek Adhel surrounded itself with so much religion and purity, that it soon was blended in her soul with that of God himself. Her husband's monument, which she visited every day, offered her only a subject of gratitude: she prayed, and wept no more; and acknowledged at last, that our sorrows, more than our joys, are the children of the Lord's mercy, since our joys bring us back to ourselves, but our sorrows to him.

One day, however, from one of the towers of the monastery, she descried on the vast sea a vessel sailing for Europe; she recognised the leopard of England, the arms of her country, and the royal pavilion with its long red flags. Richard, Bérengère, all her relations and friends, were leaving her for

ever ! They sailed towards another hemisphere, and she alone remained in the East, without family or connections.—At that thought, she looked at the ship again, the colours became dim, and the sails appeared only like a point in the horizon—soon it vanished ! The virgin's heart was oppressed, and a sigh escaped her ; but her eyes were raised to heaven, fell again on her husband's tomb, and that regret was the last !

END.

[REDACTED]



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